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Romo

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(54) **OBJECT REMOVAL THROUGH A PERCUTANEOUS SUCTION TUBE**

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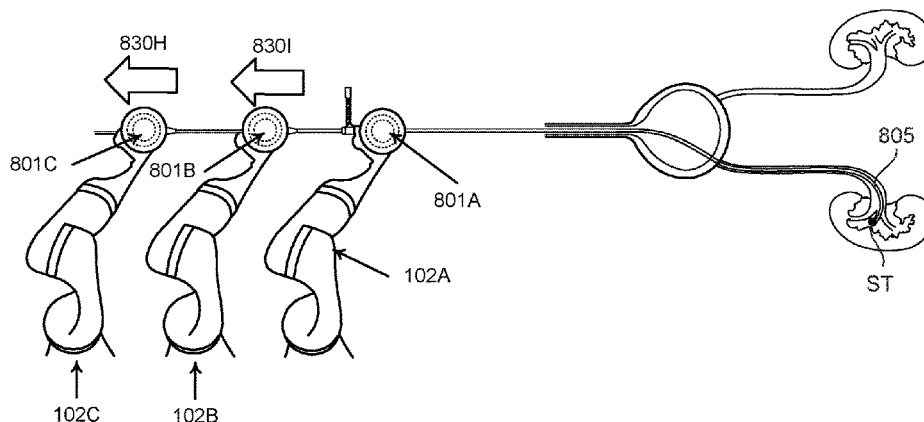
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method is described for using percutaneous access to a patient to remove an object from a cavity within the patient. The method includes inserting a suction tube into a port created by a percutaneous cut. An endoscope is also advanced into the cavity, however the endoscope passes through a patient lumen rather than through the port. Using a working channel within the endoscope, fluid is irrigated through the cavity. Additionally, a negative pressure is applied to the suction tube, such that the combination of fluid irrigation and negative pressure assist in removing the object from the cavity through the suction tube.

19 Claims, 25 Drawing Sheets



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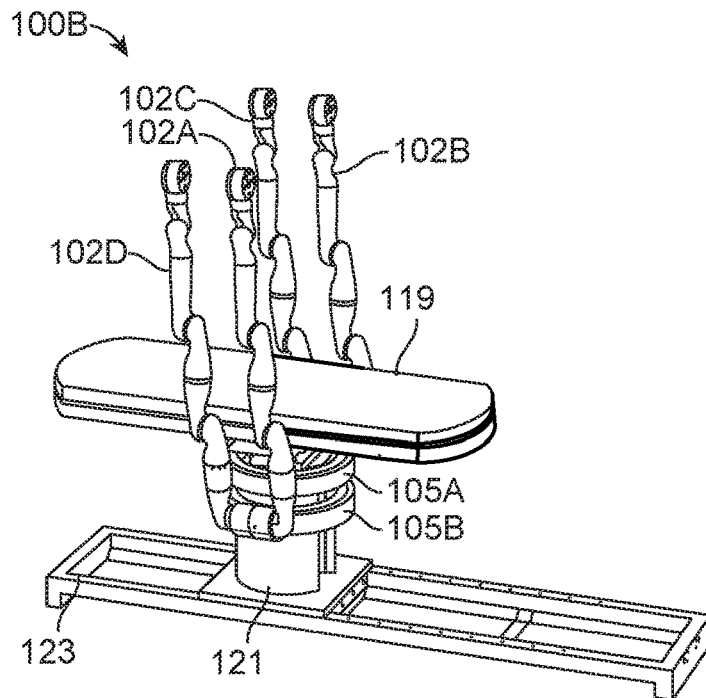
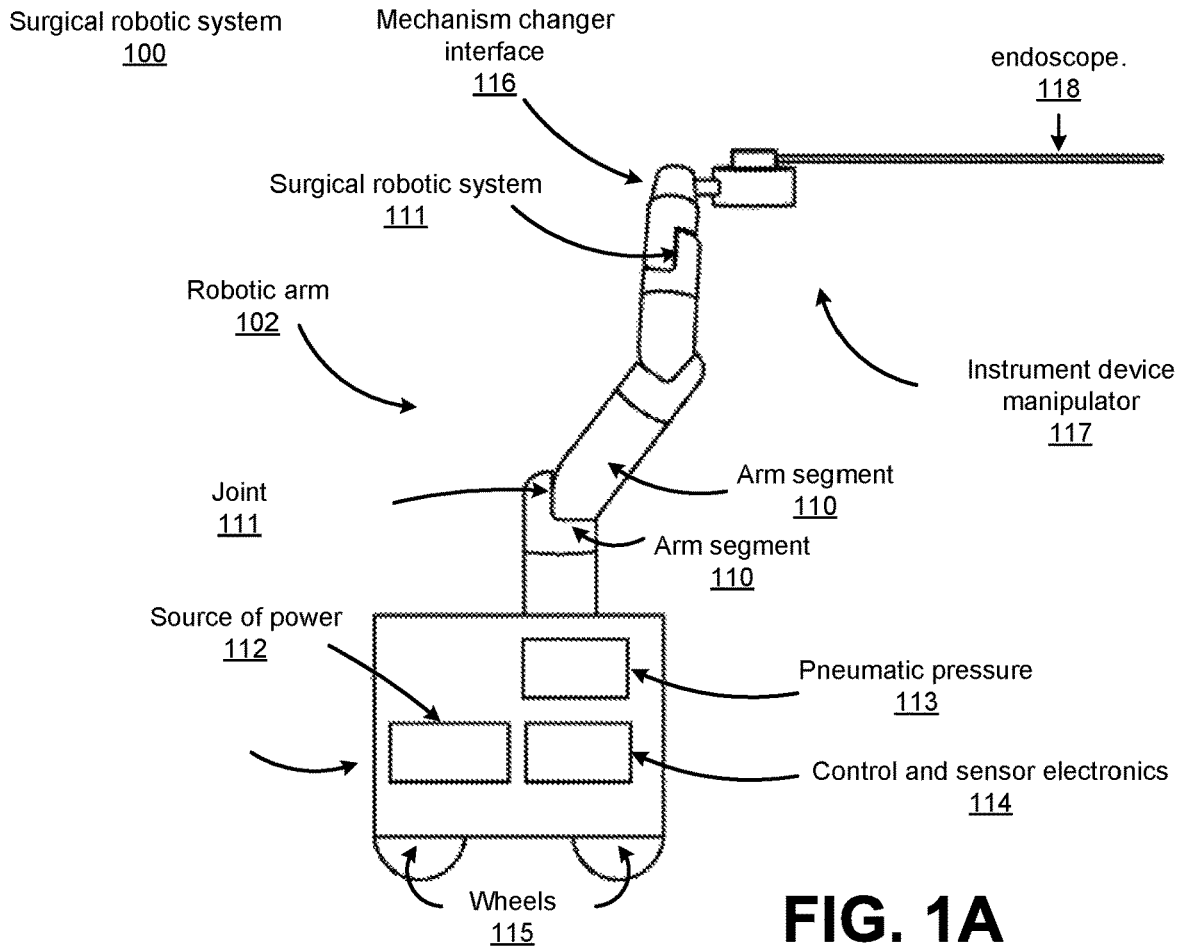
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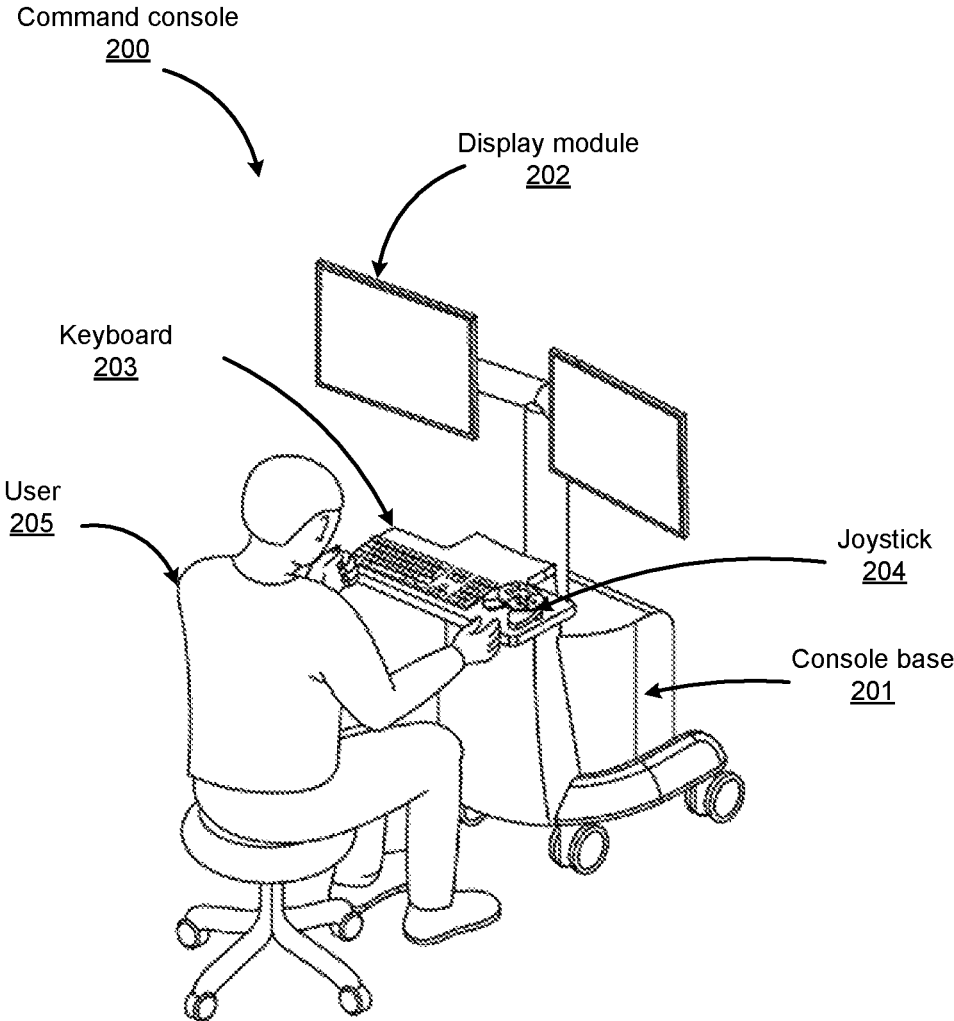


FIG. 2

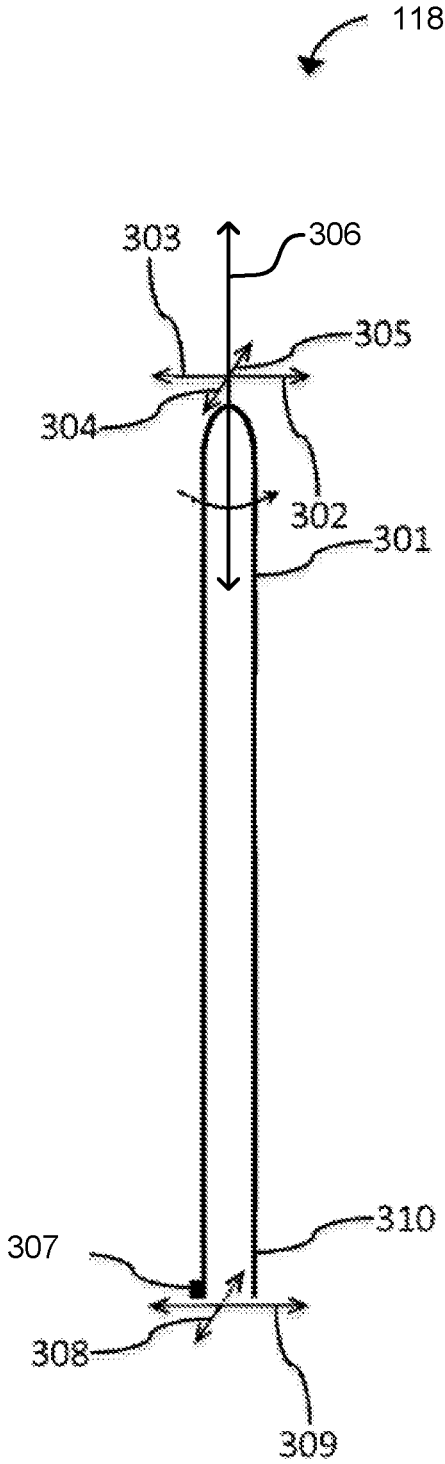


FIG. 3A

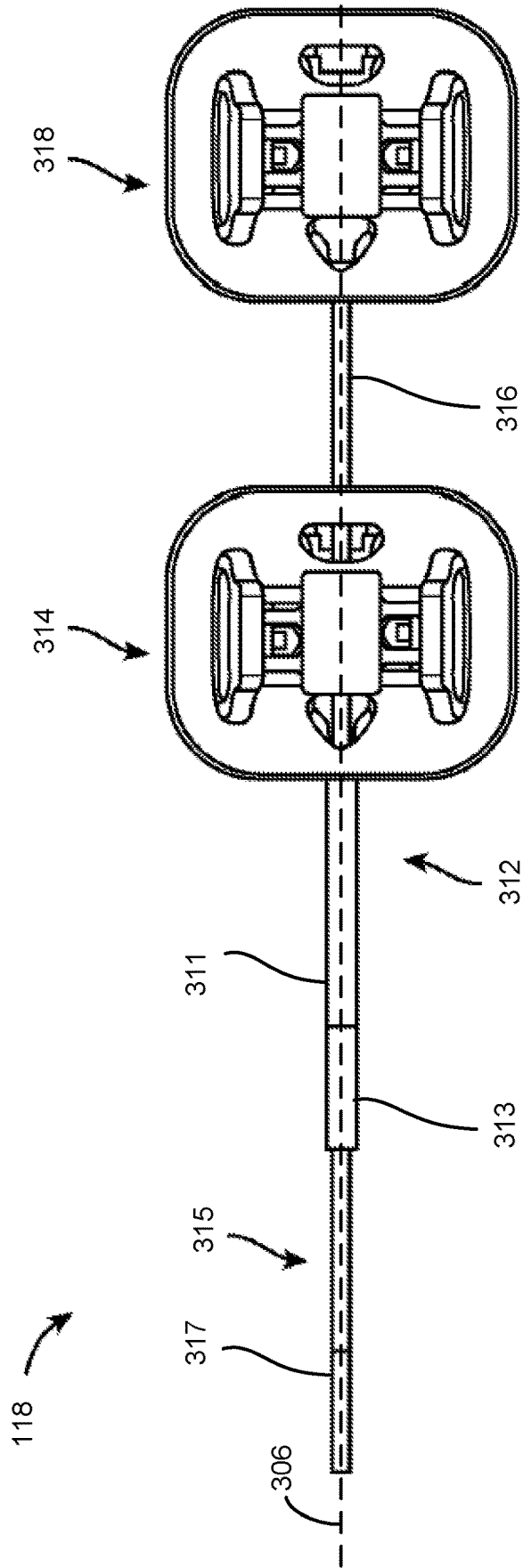


FIG. 3B

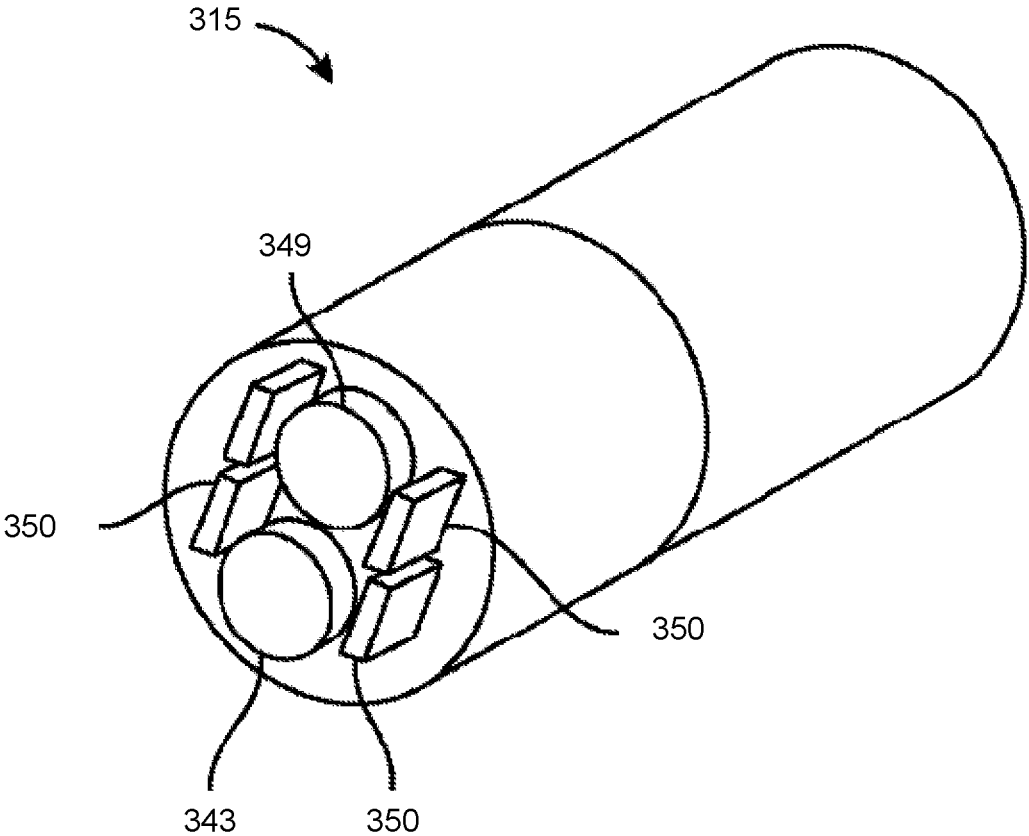


FIG. 3C

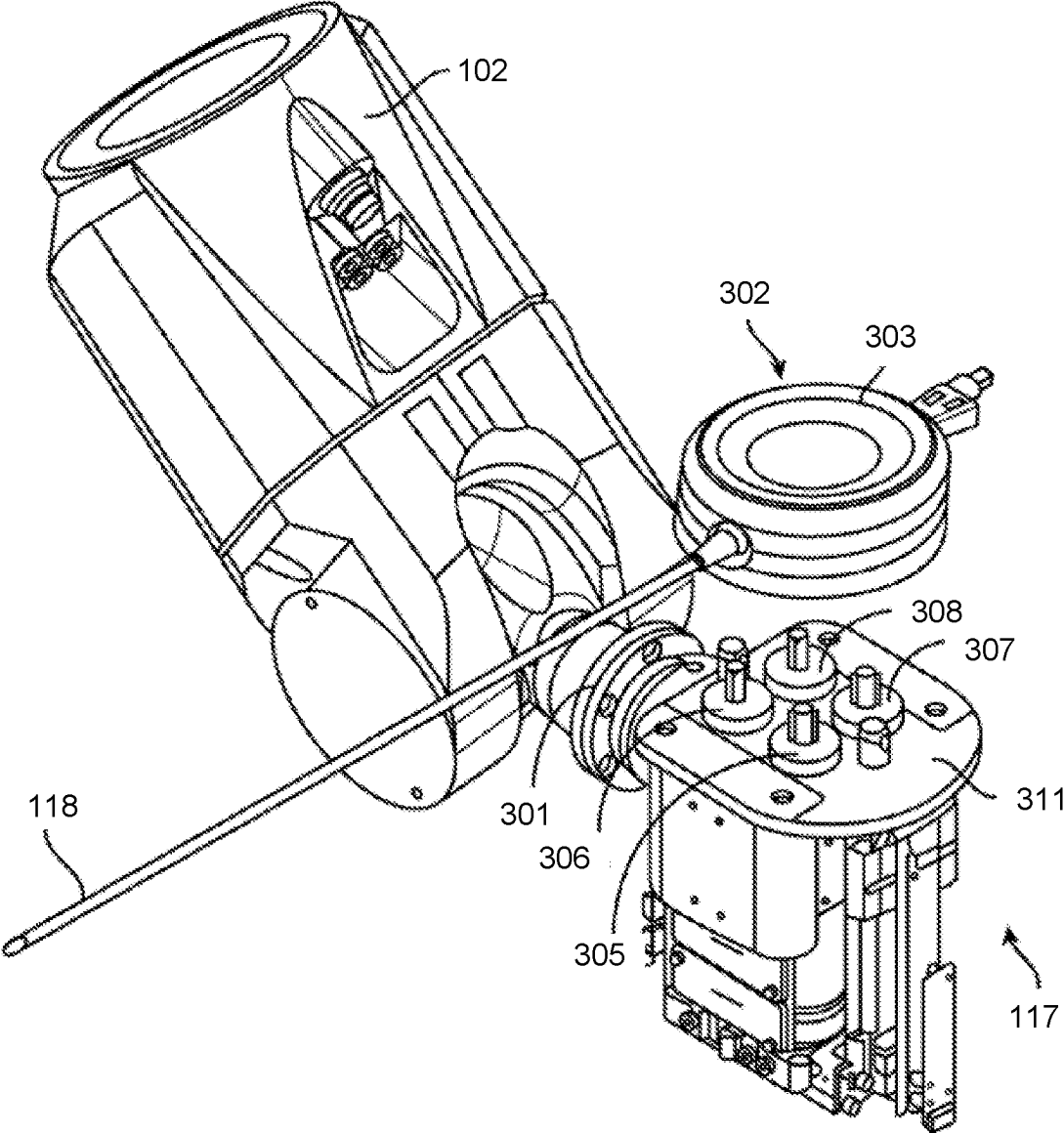


FIG. 3D

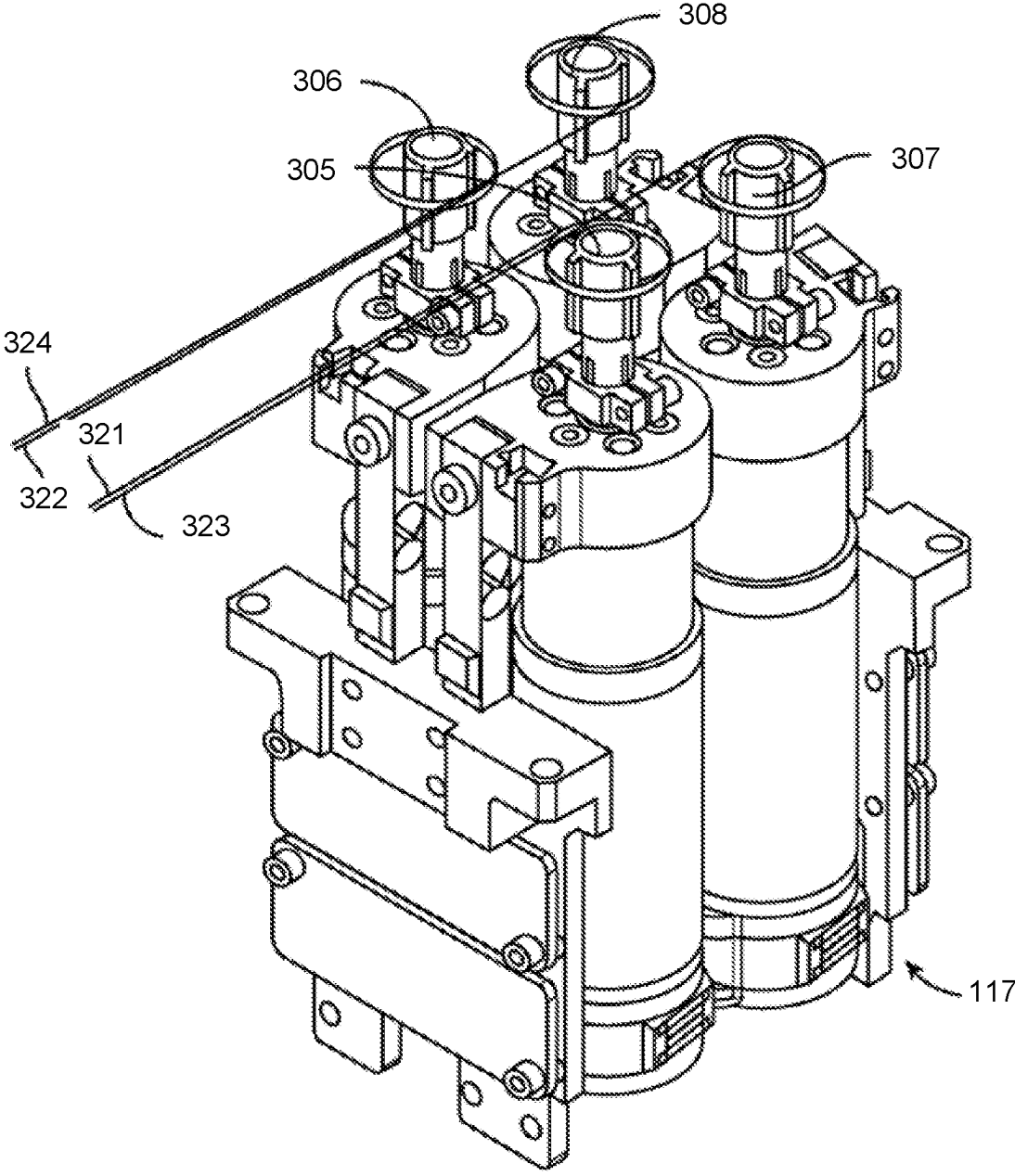


FIG. 3E

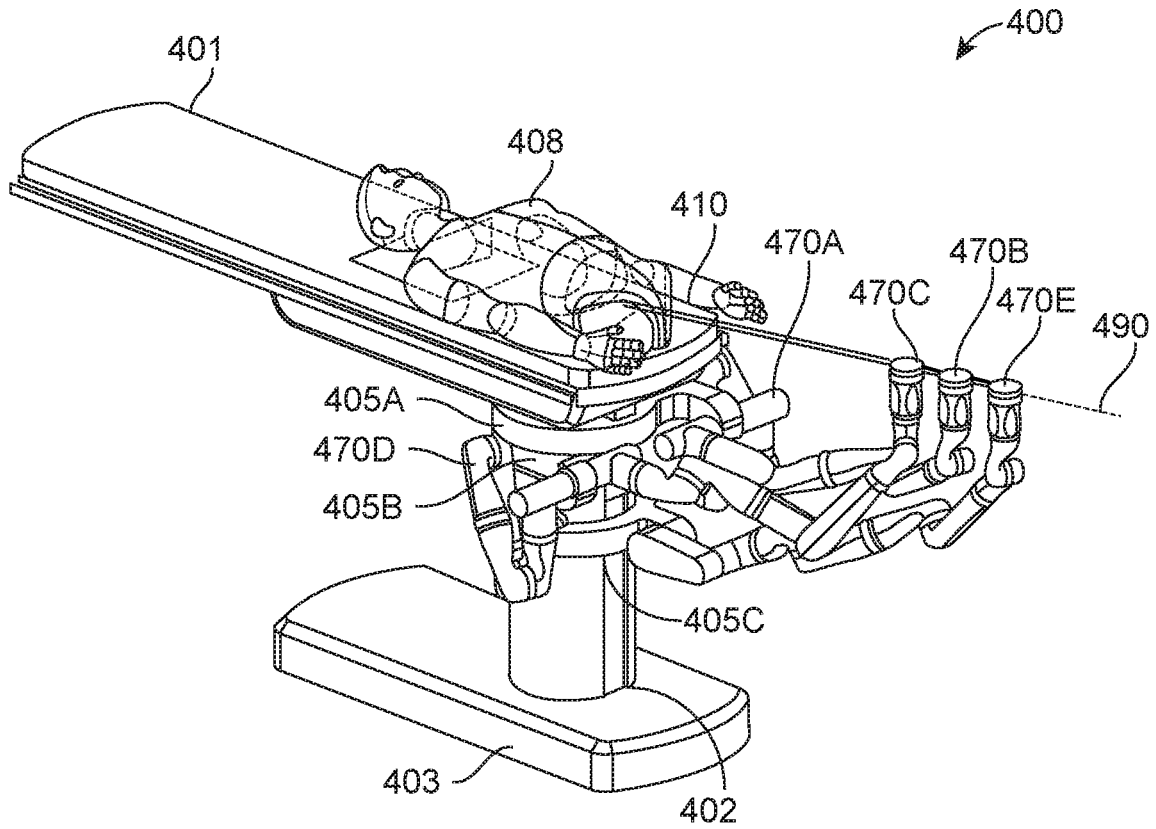


FIG. 4A

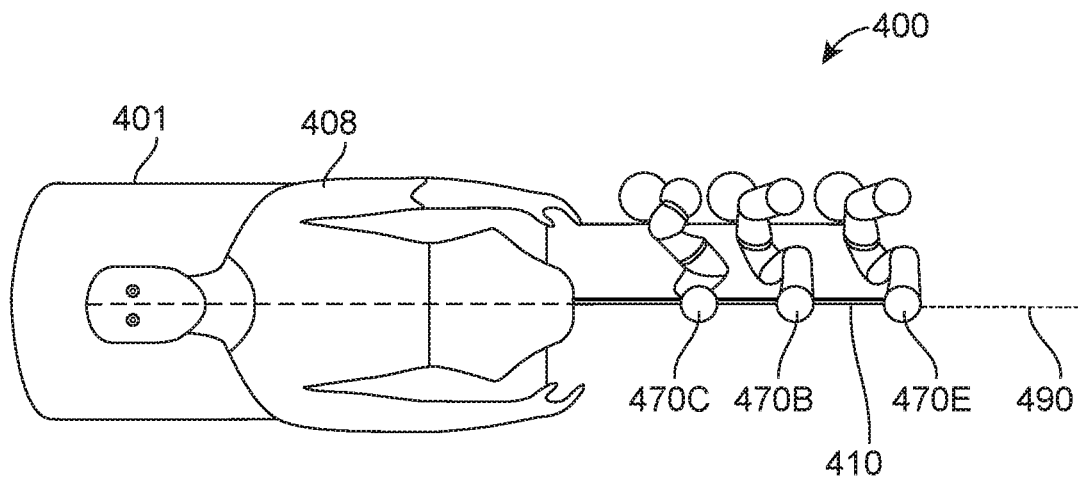
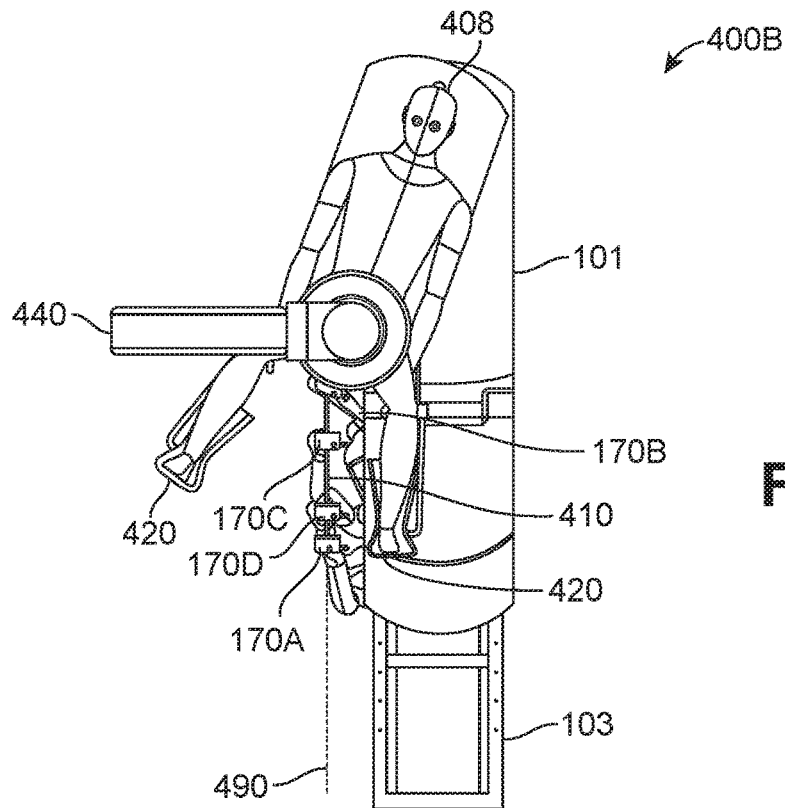
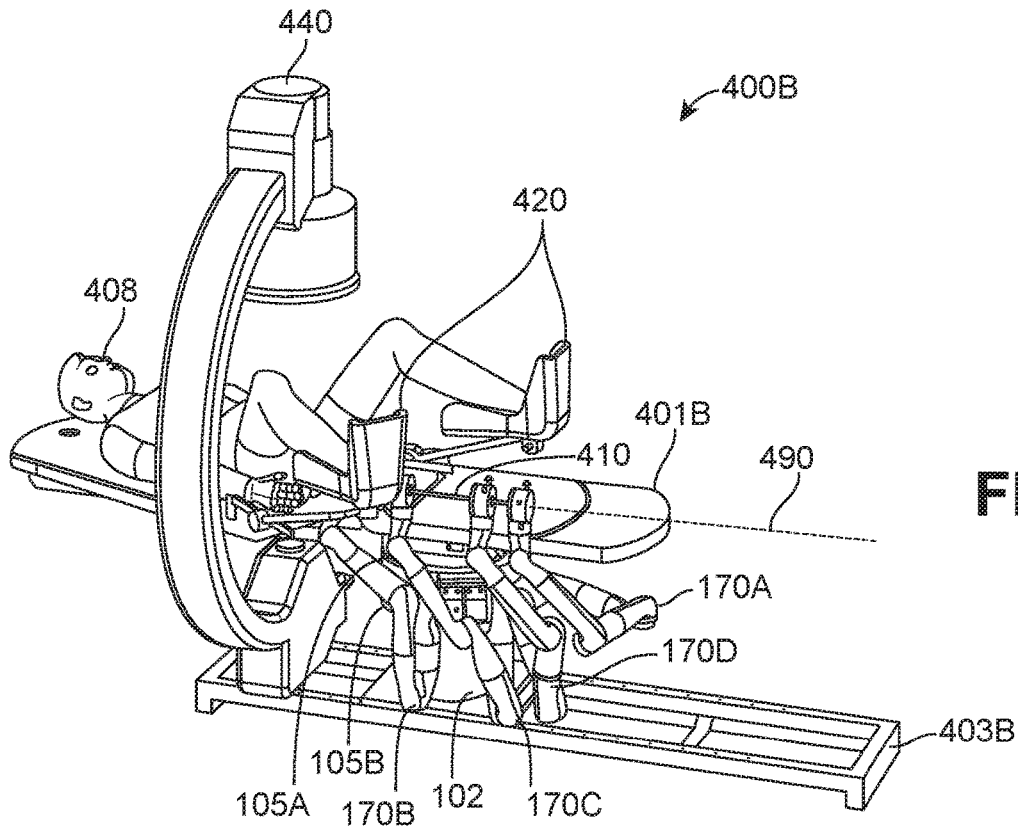


FIG. 4B



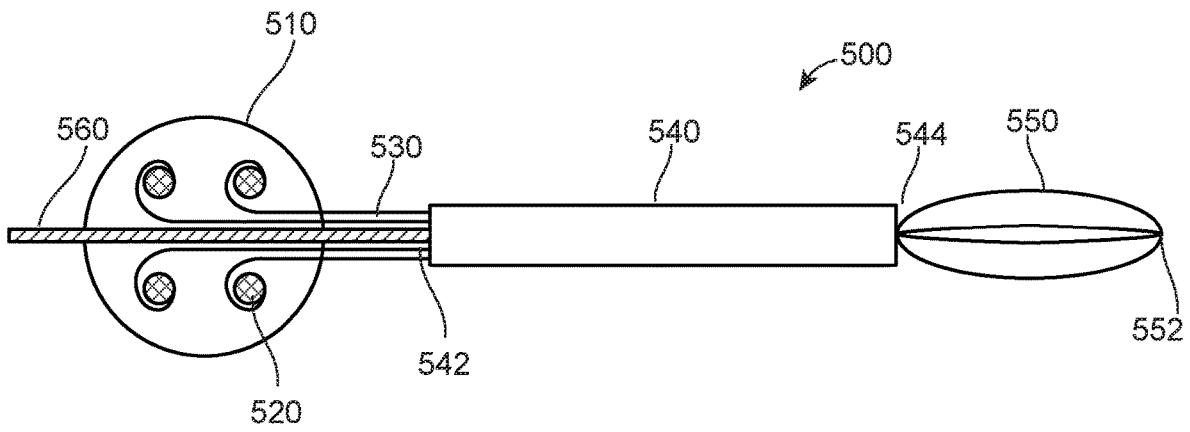


FIG. 5A

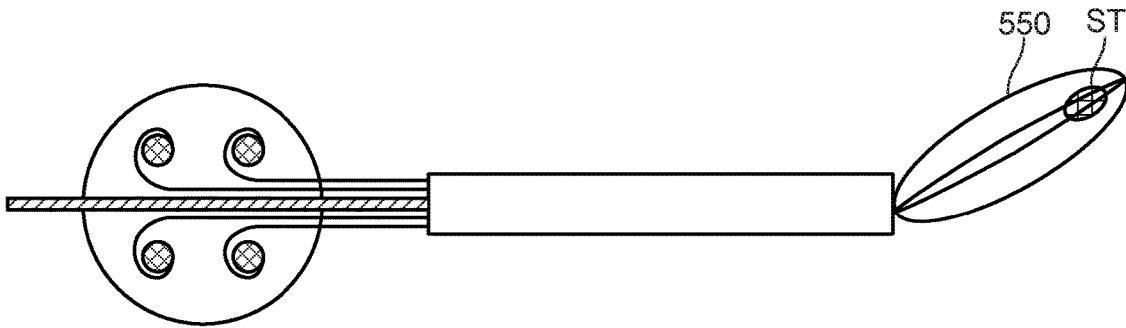


FIG. 5B

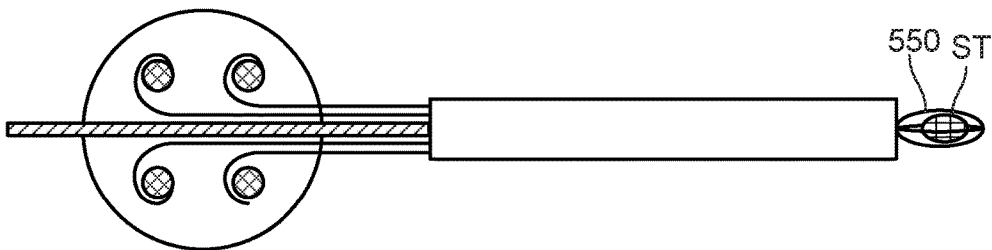


FIG. 5C

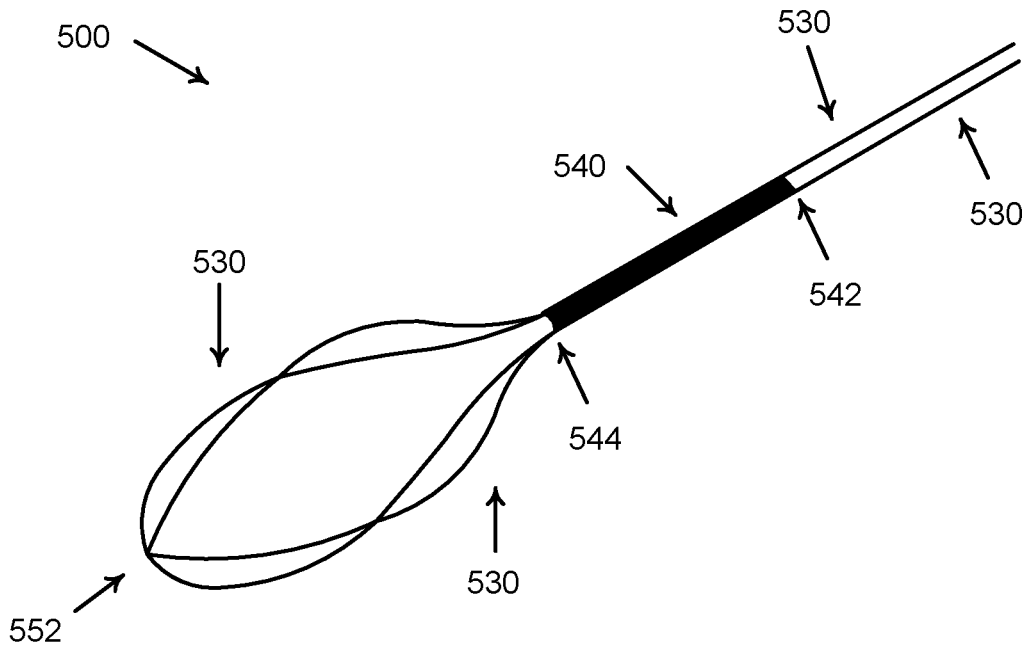


FIG. 5D

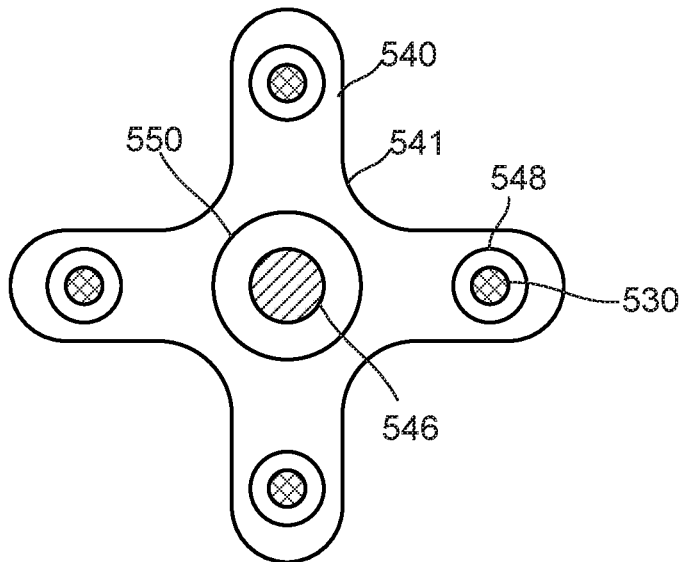


FIG. 5E

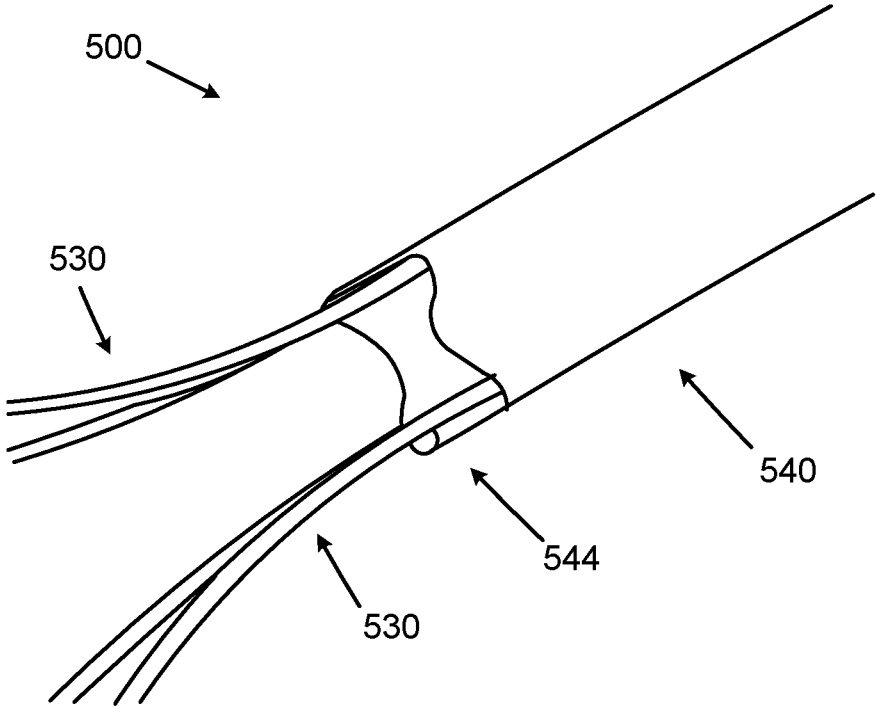


FIG. 5F

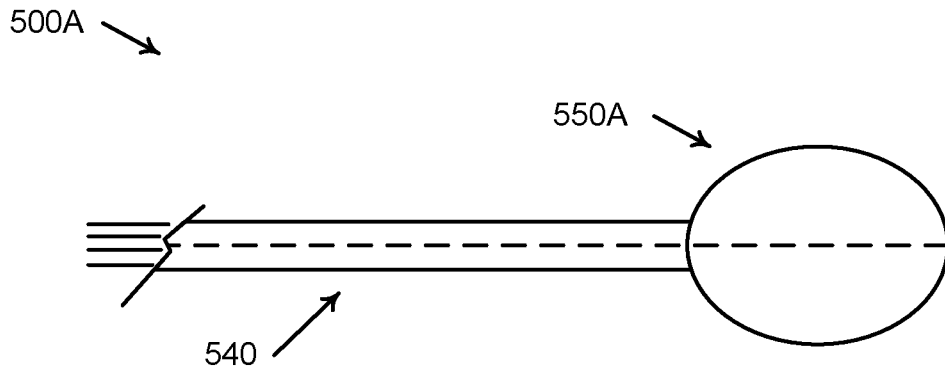


FIG. 6A

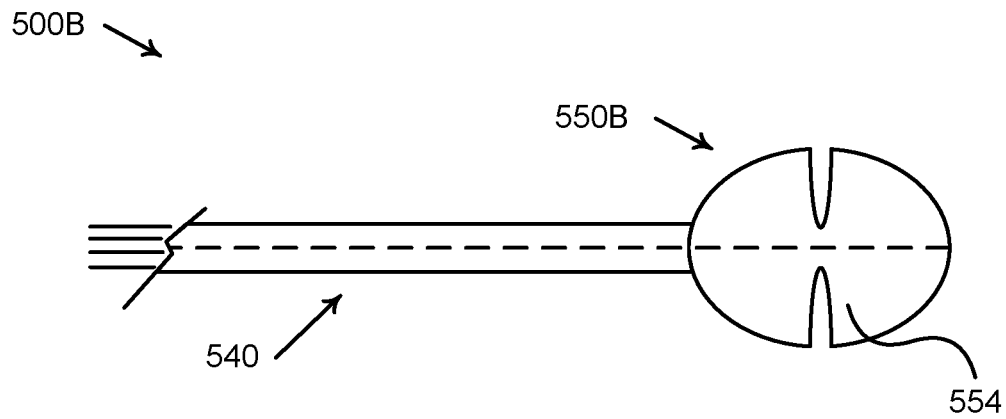


FIG. 6B

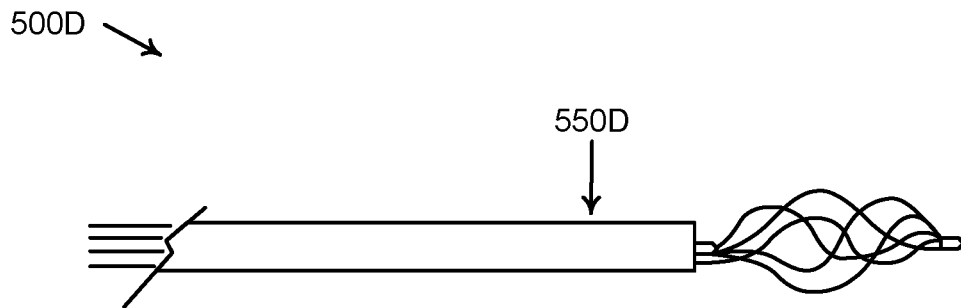
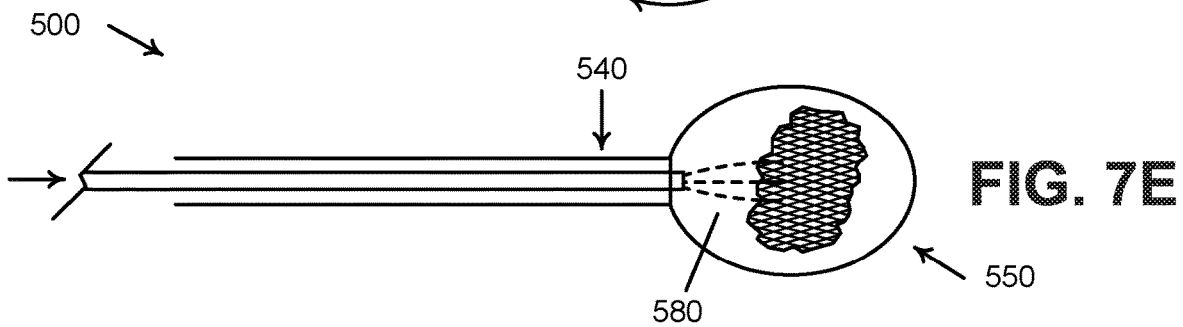
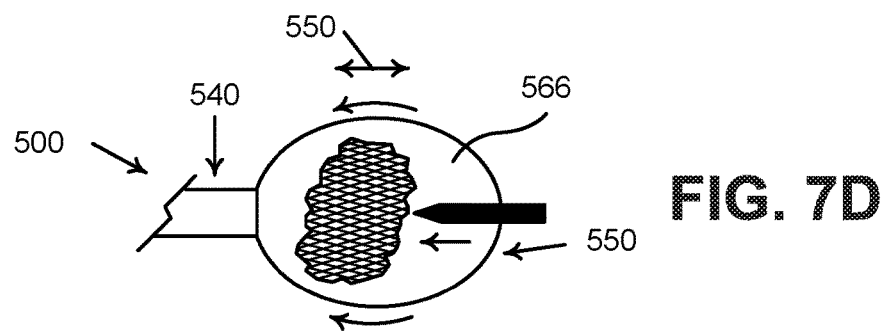
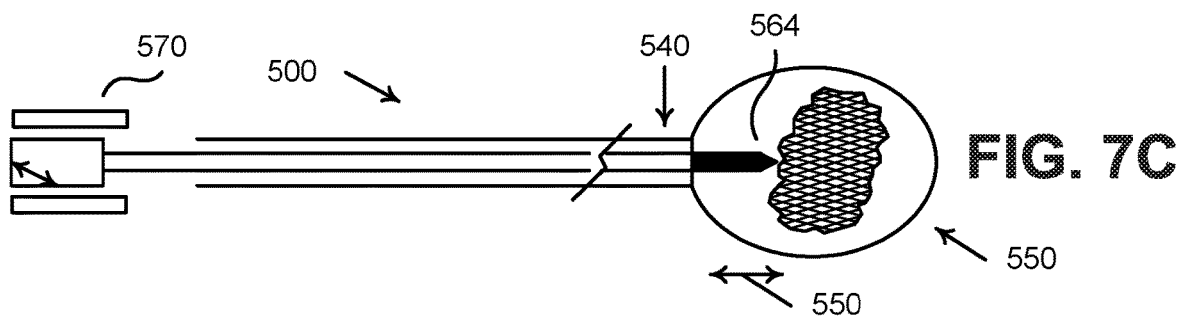
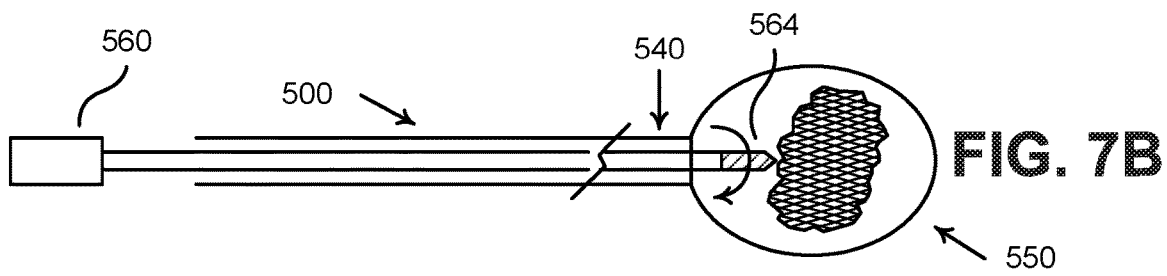
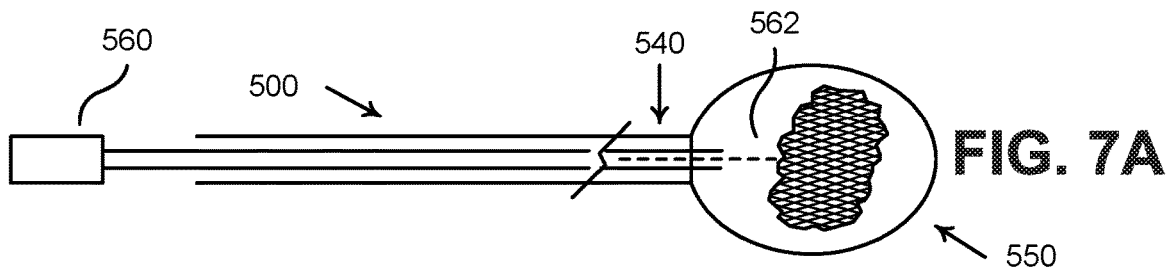


FIG. 6C



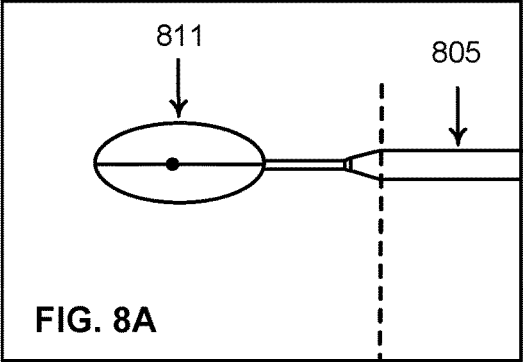


FIG. 8A

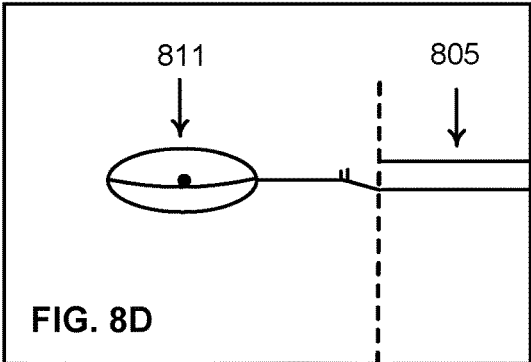


FIG. 8D

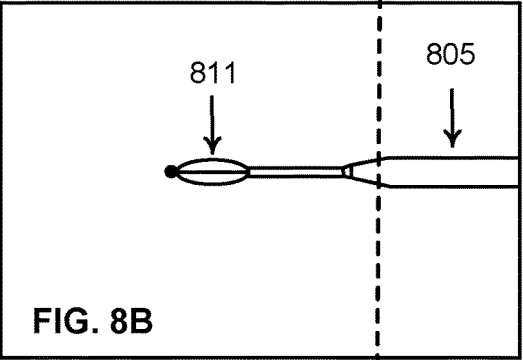


FIG. 8B

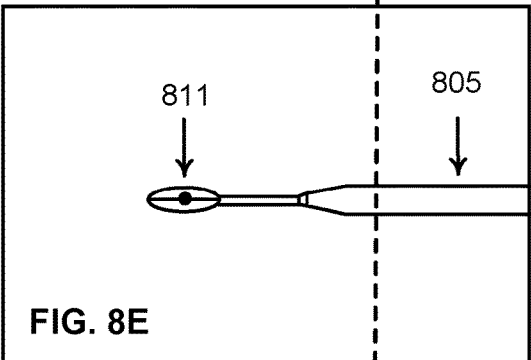


FIG. 8E

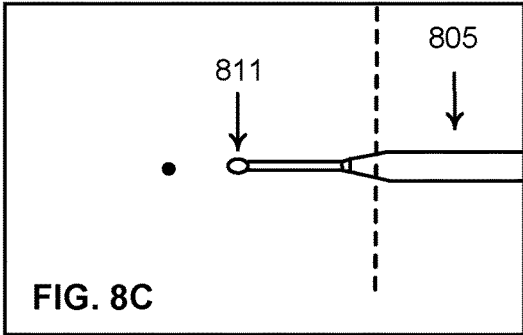


FIG. 8C

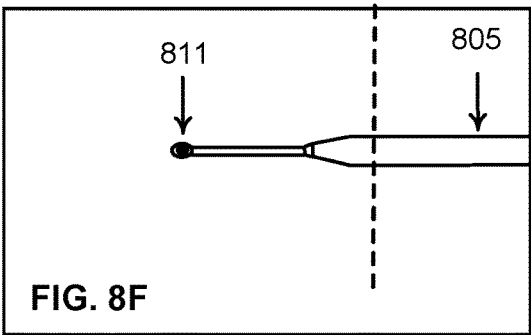


FIG. 8F

100

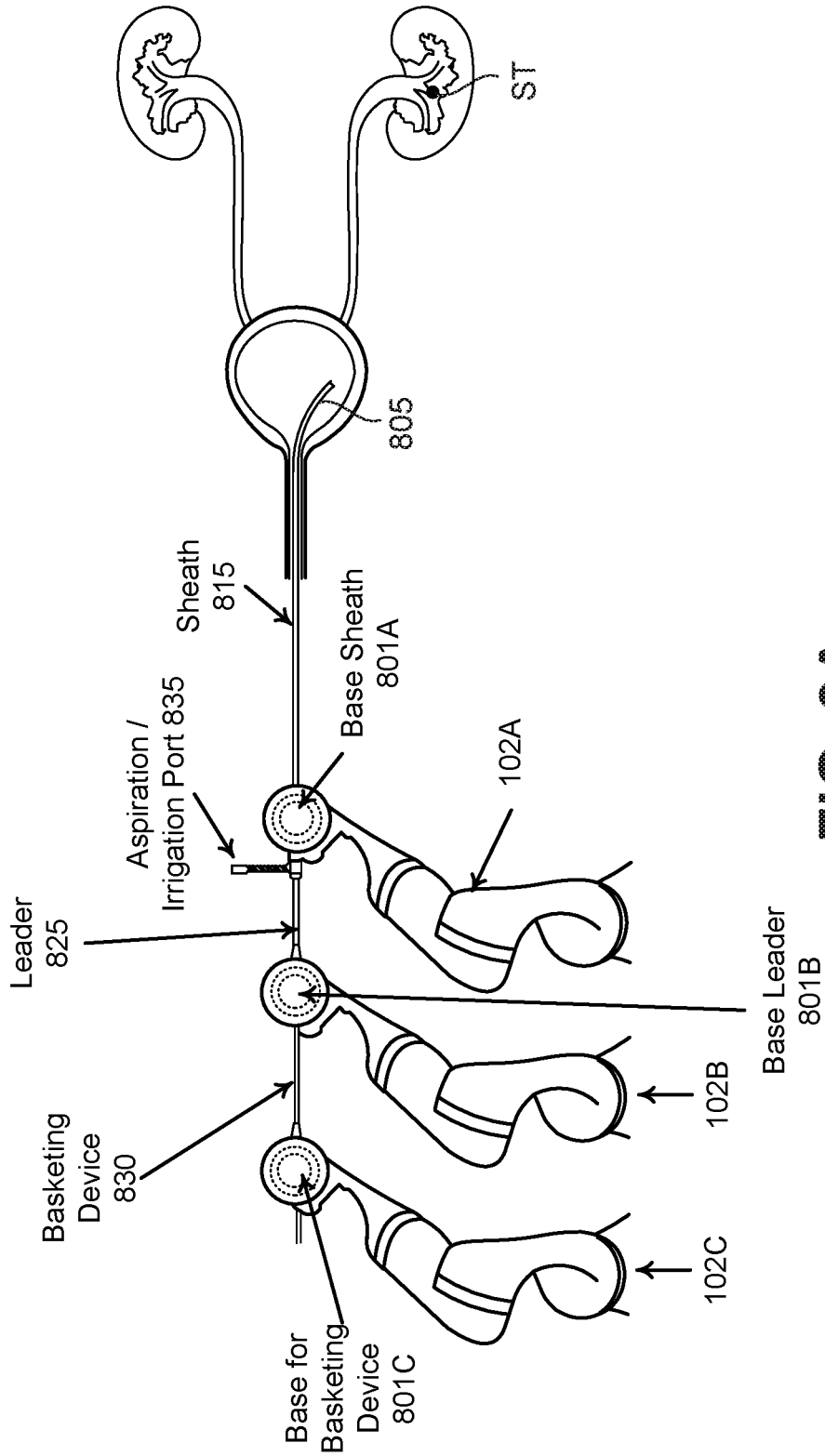


FIG. 9A

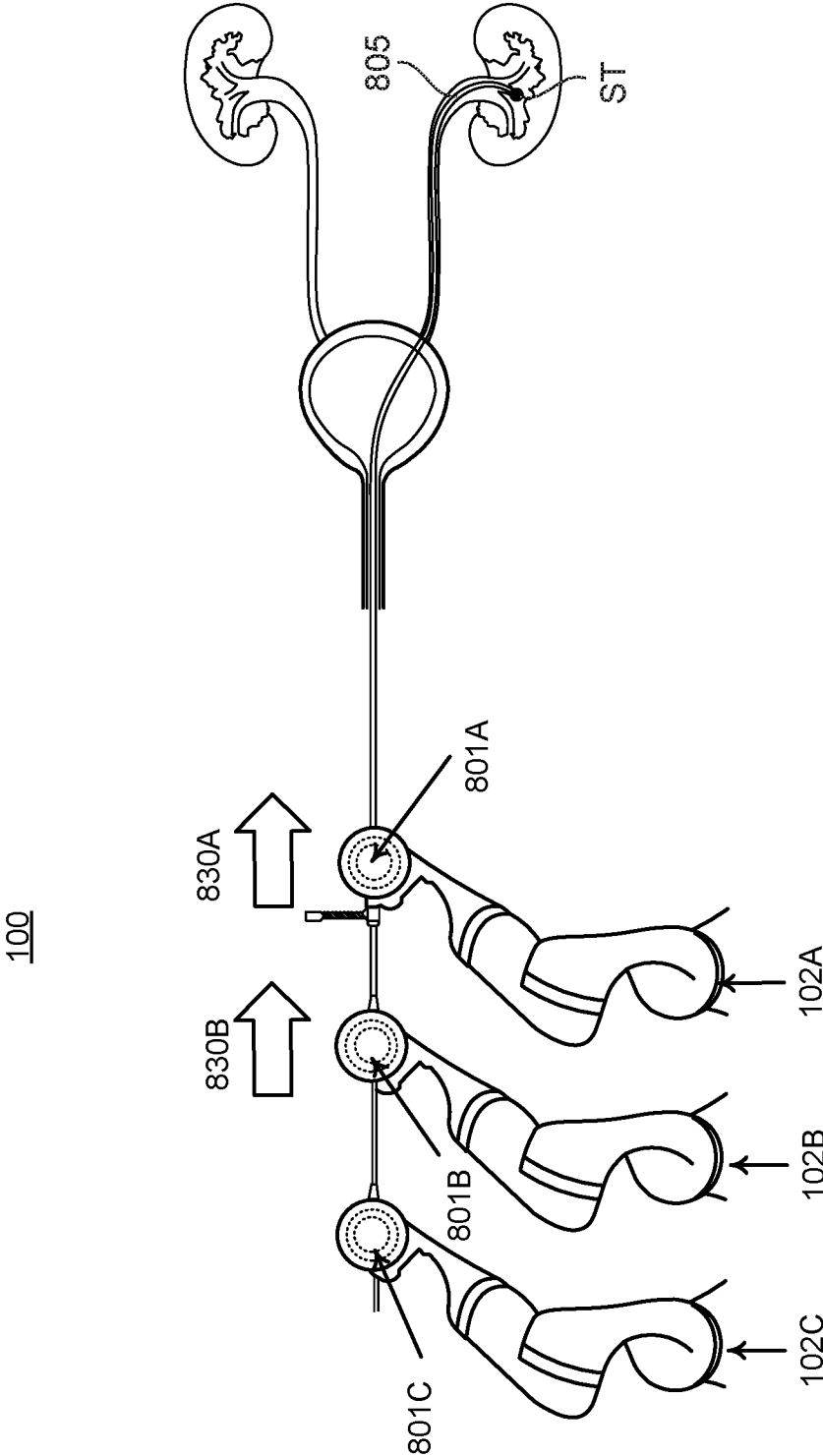


FIG. 9B

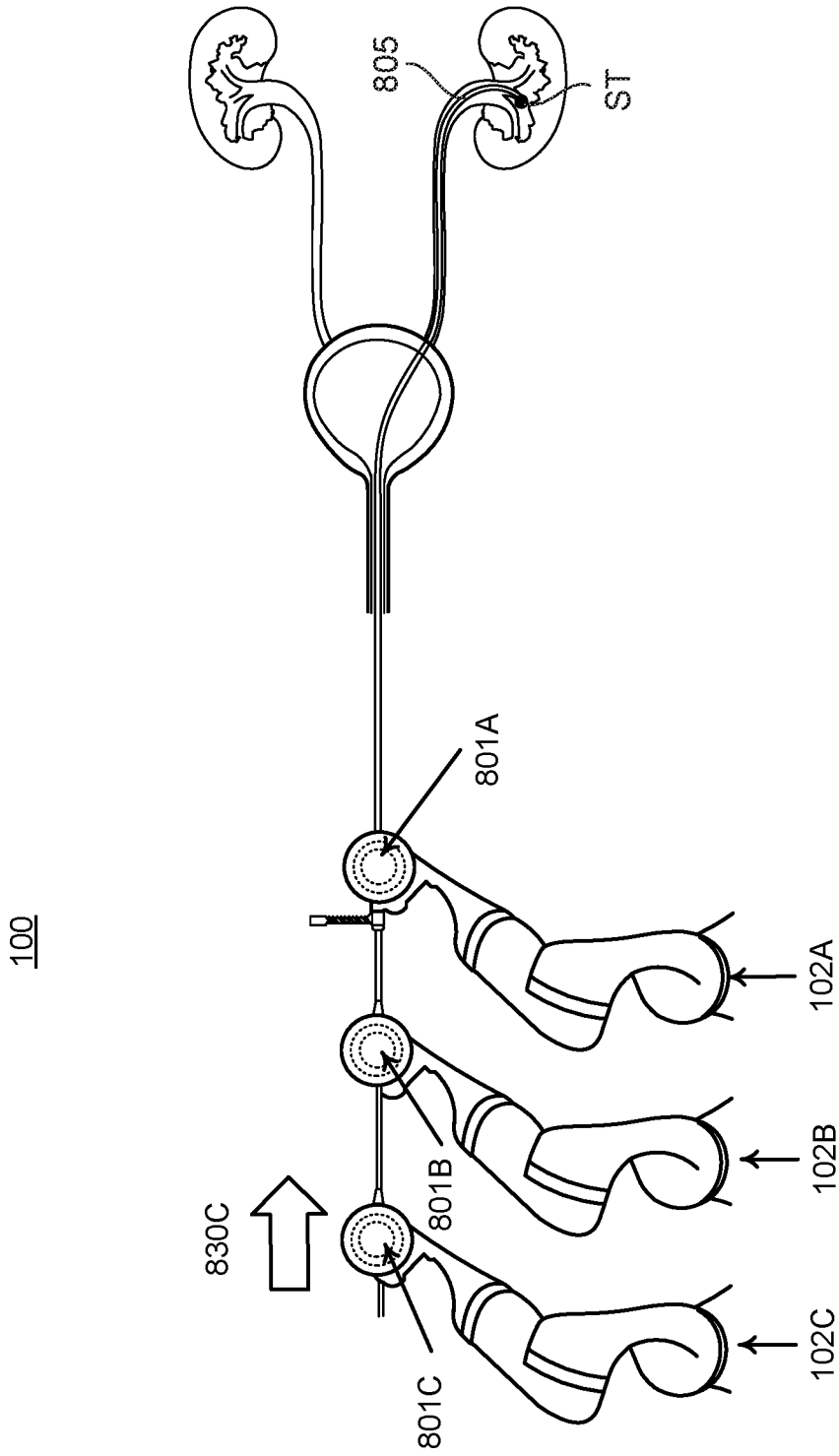


FIG. 9C

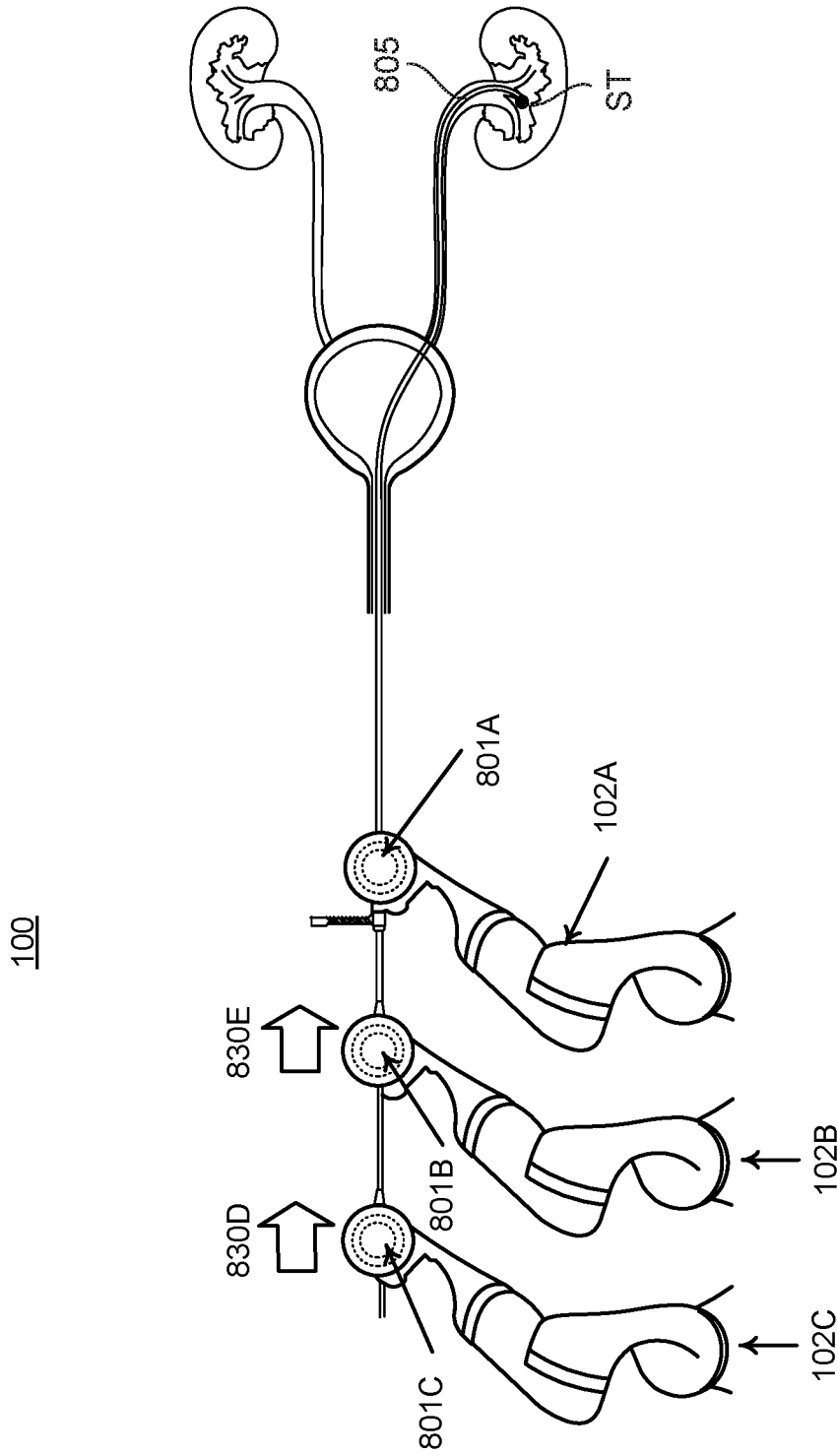


FIG. 9D

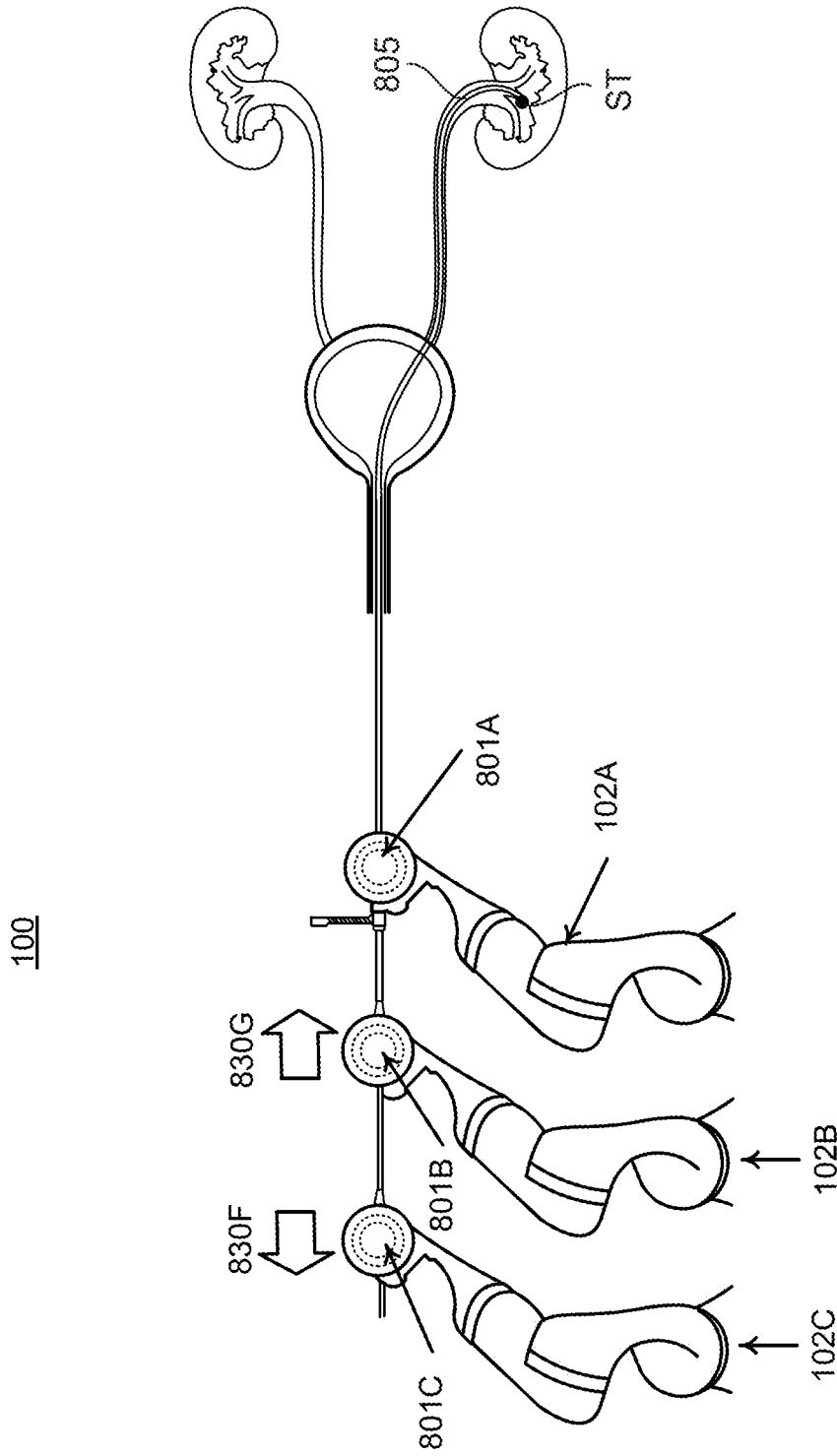


FIG. 9E

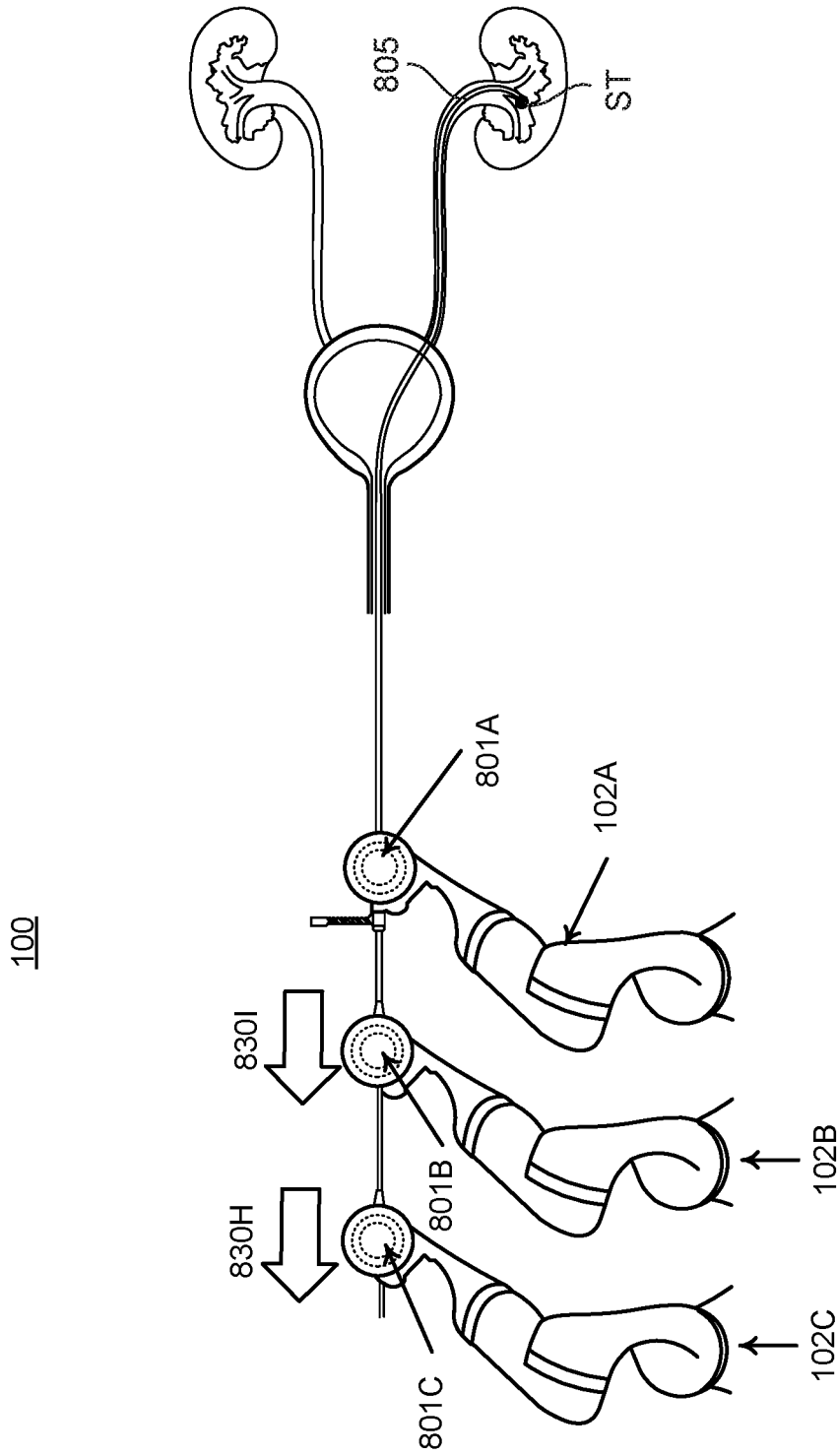


FIG. 9F

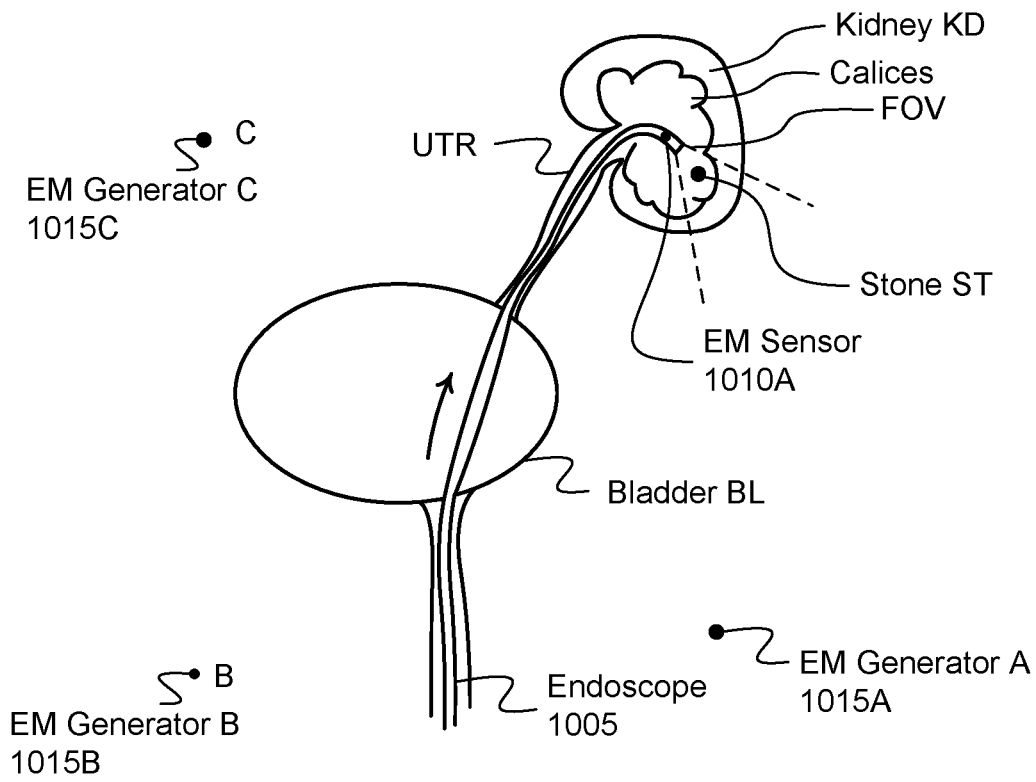


FIG. 10A

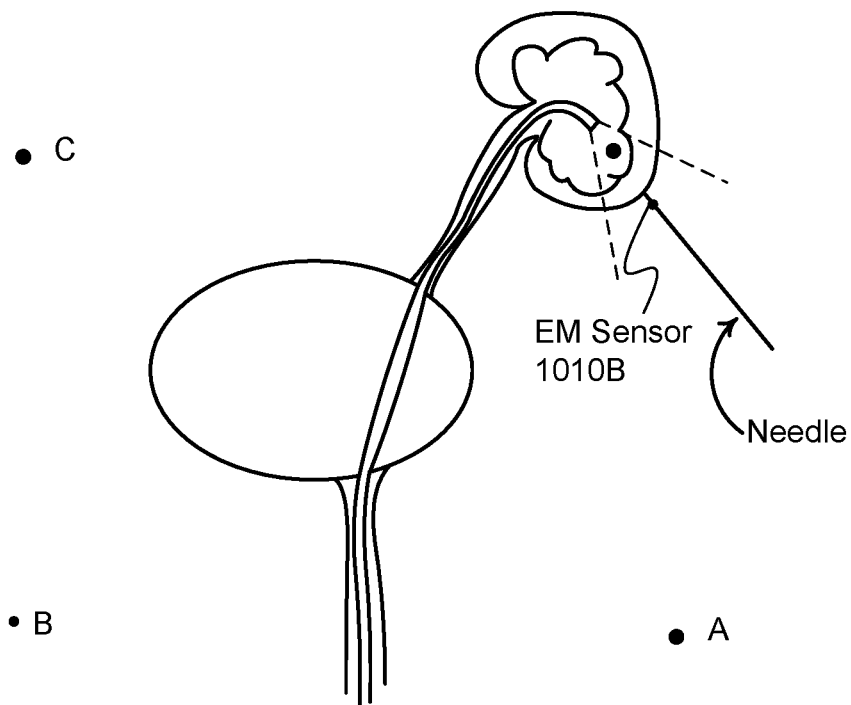


FIG. 10B

1060A

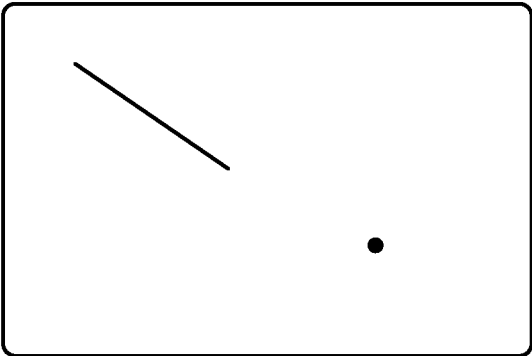


FIG. 10C

1060B

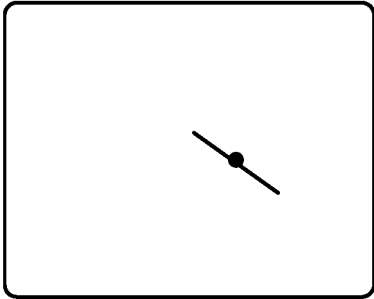


FIG. 10D

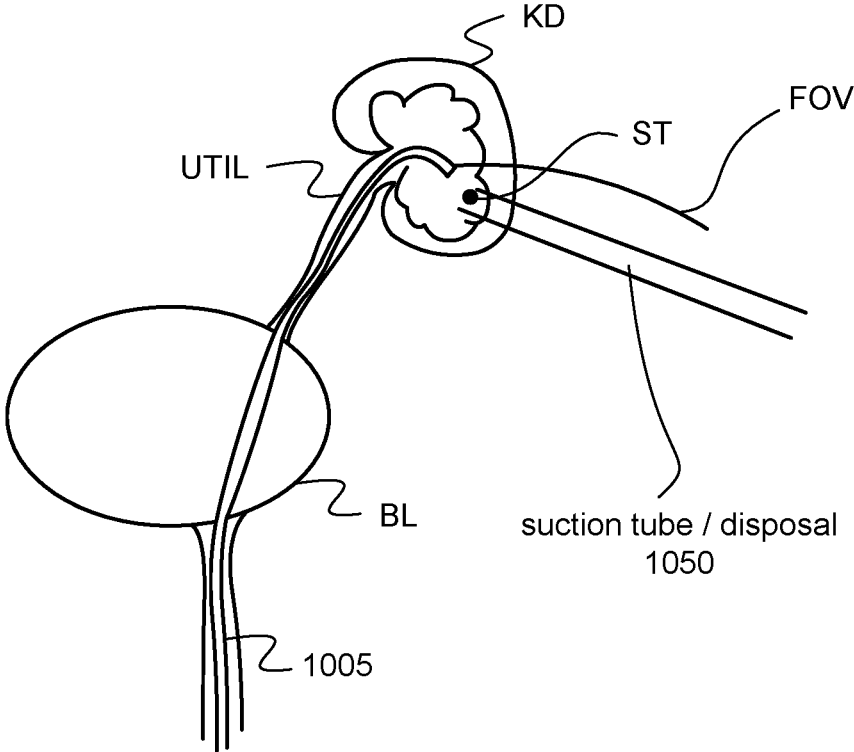


FIG. 10E

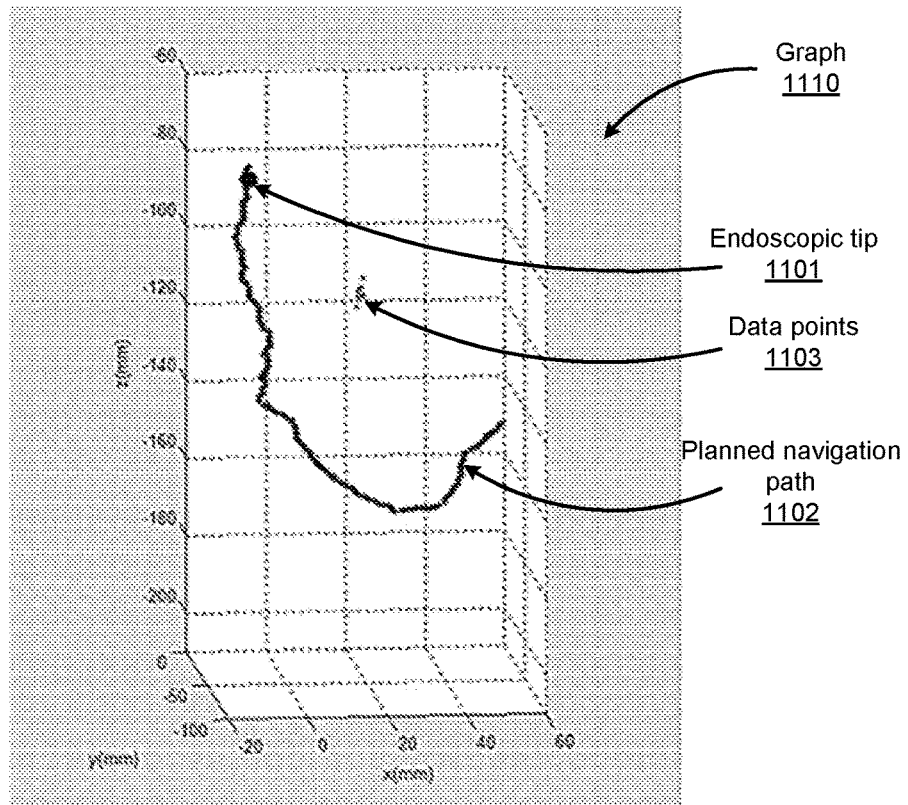


FIG. 11A

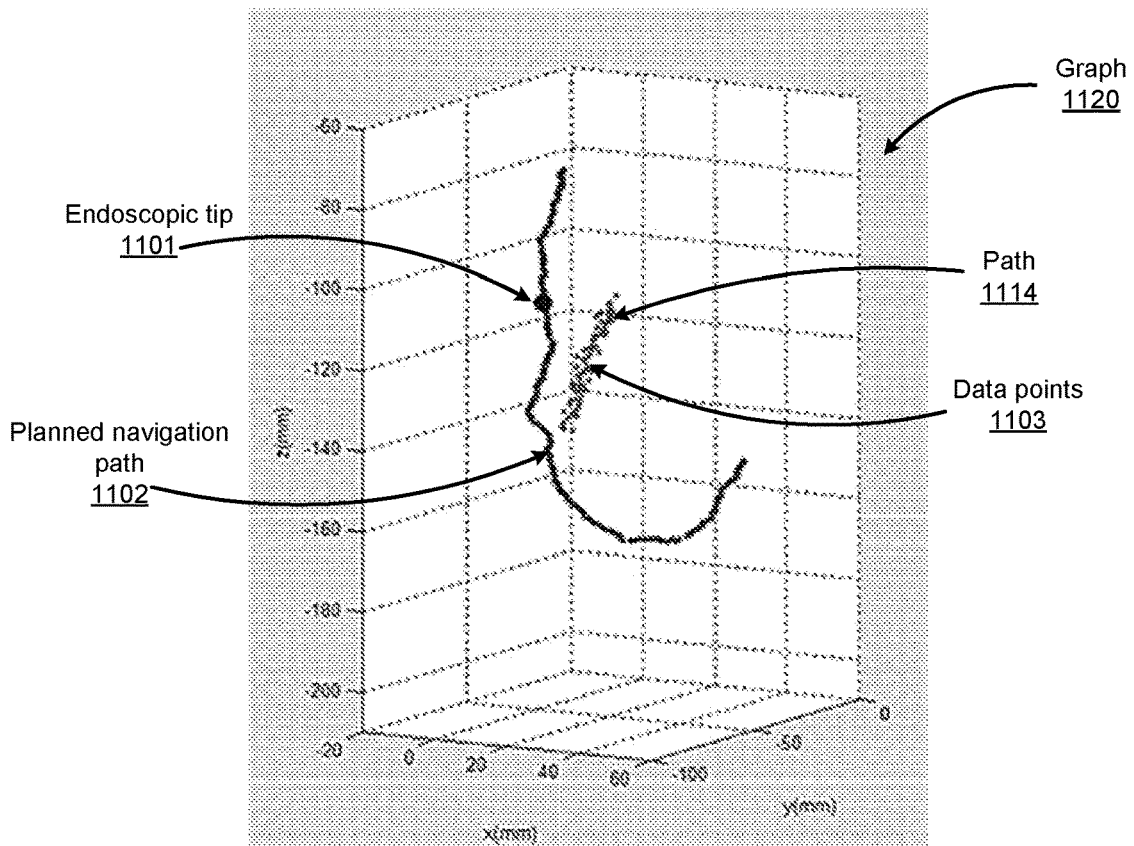


FIG. 11B

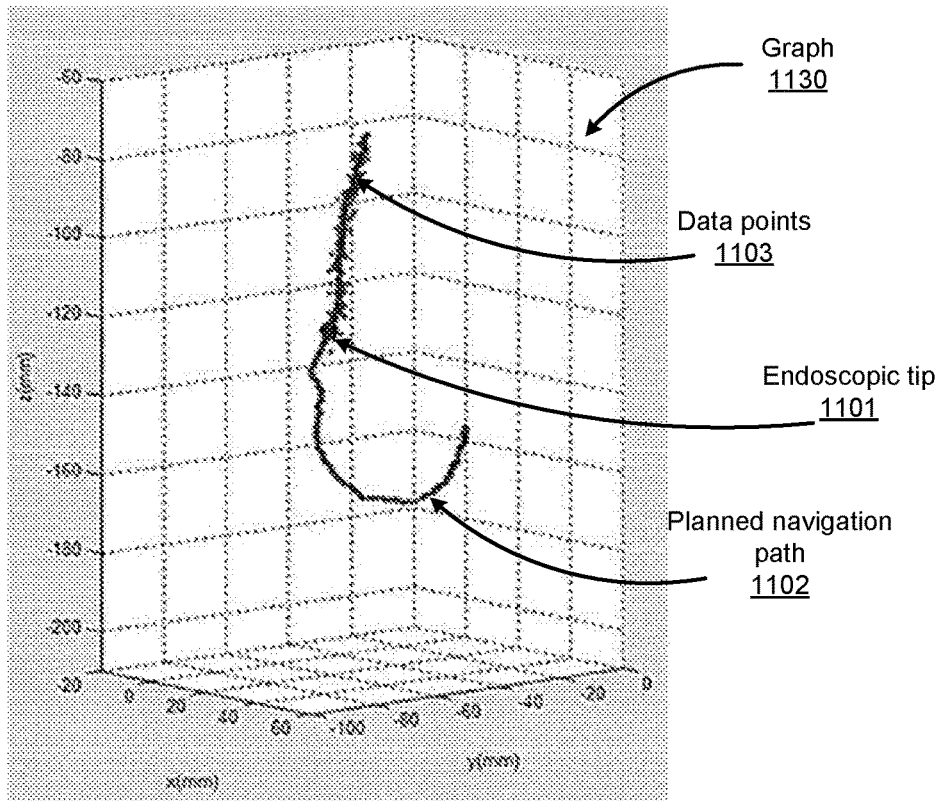


FIG. 11C

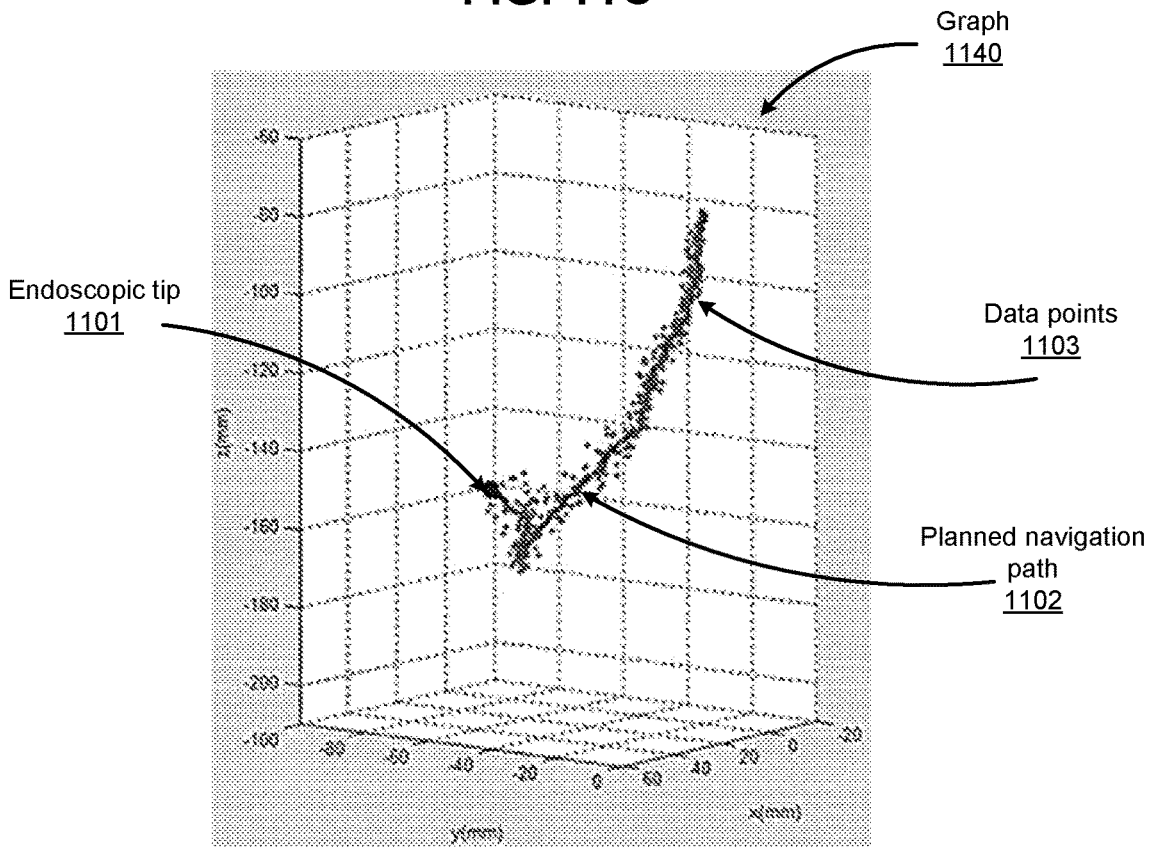


FIG. 11D

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OBJECT REMOVAL THROUGH A PERCUTANEOUS SUCTION TUBE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 15/339,520, filed Oct. 31, 2016, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,231,793 which claims the benefit of priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 62/249,050, filed Oct. 30, 2015, each of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Field of Art

This description generally relates to surgical robotics, and particularly to lithotomy devices and procedures using a surgical robotics system.

2. Description of the Related Art

Every year, doctors perform thousands of procedures to remove urinary stones from patients' urinary tracts. Urinary stones may include kidney stones found in the kidneys and ureters as well as bladder stones found in the bladder. Such urinary stones form as a result of concentrated minerals and cause significant abdominal pain once they reach a size sufficient to impede urine flow through the ureter or urethra. Such stones may formed from calcium, magnesium, ammonia, ur acid, cysteine, or other compounds.

To remove urinary stones from the bladder and ureter, surgeons use a ureteroscope inserted into the urinary tract through the urethra. Typically, a ureteroscope includes an endoscope at its distal end to enable visualization of the urinary tract. The ureteroscope also includes a lithotomy mechanism to capture or break apart urinary stones. During the ureteroscopy procedure, one physician controls the position of the ureteroscope and the other surgeon controls the lithotomy mechanism. The controls of the ureteroscope are located on a proximal handle of the ureteroscope and accordingly are difficult to grasp as the orientation of the ureteroscope changes. Accordingly, present ureteroscopy techniques are labor intensive and reliant on ureteroscopes with non-ergonomic designs.

To remove large kidney stones from the kidneys, surgeons use a percutaneous nephrolithotomy technique that includes inserting a nephroscope through the skin to break up and remove the kidney stone. However, present techniques for percutaneous nephrolithotomy ("PCNL") include using fluoroscopy to locate the kidney stone and to ensure accurate insertion of the nephroscope. Fluoroscopy increases the cost of the nephrolithotomy procedure due to the cost of the fluoroscope itself as well as the cost of a technician to operate the fluoroscope. Fluoroscopy also exposes the patient to radiation for a prolonged period of time. Even with fluoroscopy, accurately making a percutaneous incision to access the kidney stone is difficult and imprecise. Additionally, present nephrolithotomy techniques typically involve a two-day or three-day inpatient stay. In sum, present nephrolithotomy techniques are costly and problematic for patients.

SUMMARY

This description includes methods and devices for more easily carrying out a ureteroscopy. This description also

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includes methods and devices for more easily carrying out a PCNL. For ureteroscopy, a basketing device includes a number of independently manipulable pull wires that allow full 360 degree motion of the basket, which makes capture of a stone easier. A central working channel in the basketing apparatus allows a variety of other tools to be placed near a basket to break up a captured stone. Further, a technique for ureteroscopy is described that helps prevent stones from escaping from a basket while the basket is being closed.

For PCNL, a variety of techniques and devices are described that make use of an alignment sensor in place of fluoroscopy to detect the position of a stone in a kidney. The alignment sensor may, for example, be an EM sensor which works in conjunction with EM field generators placed around the patient and an associated CT (or other) scan to provide position and orientation information for EM sensor in the patient's body. The alignment sensor is placed via a cavity, such as the ureter using a ureteroscope, and together with a camera is used to identify the location of the stone. The alignment sensor provides a guidance mechanism for directing the percutaneous cut for accessing the stone within the kidney. Further, as at this point in the PCNL procedure, a scope is already present, a working channel of the scope can be used to advance other tools to assist in the removal of the stone through a port created by the PCNL. Techniques for performing the PCNL are described, as well as for how to go about removing the stone via the PCNL port.

Although this description is largely described with respect to the example use cases of ureteroscopy, PCNL, and the removal of urinary stones and stone fragments, these descriptions are equally applicable to other surgical operations concerned with the removal of objects from the patient, including any object that can be safely removed via a patient cavity (e.g., the esophagus, ureter, intestine, etc.) or via percutaneous access, such as gallbladder stone removal or lung (pulmonary/transthoracic) tumor biopsy.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A shows an example surgical robotic system, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of a surgical robotics system with column-mounted robotic arms according to one embodiment.

FIG. 2 shows an example command console for the example surgical robotic system **100**, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 3A illustrates multiple degrees of motion of an endoscope according to one embodiment.

FIG. 3B is a top view of an endoscope according to one embodiment.

FIG. 3C is an isometric view of the distal end of the leader of an endoscope according to one embodiment.

FIG. 3D is an isometric view of an instrument device manipulator of the surgical robotic system according to one embodiment.

FIG. 3E is an exploded isometric view of the instrument device manipulator shown in FIG. 3D according to one embodiment.

FIG. 4A is a perspective view of a surgical robotics system with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of a simulated patient according to one embodiment.

FIG. 4B is a top view of the surgical robotics system with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of the simulated patient according to one embodiment.

FIG. 4C is a perspective view of an imaging device and a surgical robotics system with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of a patient according to one embodiment.

FIG. 4D is a top view of the imaging device and the surgical robotics system with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of the patient according to one embodiment.

FIG. 5A is a side view of a basket apparatus according to one embodiment.

FIGS. 5B and 5C illustrate how the basket apparatus may be used to capture a kidney stone according to one embodiment.

FIG. 5D shows a perspective view of the robotically steerable basket apparatus, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 5E shows a planar view of the robotically steerable basket apparatus along the plane perpendicular to the center axis of the outer support shaft, assuming it is straight, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 5F and illustrates a close up view of the distal end of the outer support shaft of the basket apparatus, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 6A illustrates an embodiment where the basket has have a spherical shape.

FIG. 6B illustrates an embodiment where the basket is shaped so as to form jaws.

FIG. 6C illustrates an embodiment where the basket is formed of spiral or helically shaped pull wires.

FIG. 7A illustrates insertion of a laser or optical fiber to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 7B illustrates insertion of a mechanical drill to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment.

FIGS. 7C and 7D illustrate use of a chisel to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 7E illustrate use of a high pressure fluid jet to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment.

FIGS. 8A-8C illustrate a significant challenge that can face operators during a basketing operation, according to one embodiment.

FIGS. 8D-8F illustrate a process for overcoming the challenge in basketing a stone, according to one embodiment.

FIGS. 9A-9F illustrate a process for positioning and controlling a basket apparatus to trap stones (and stone fragments) during a robotically assisted ureteroscopy, according to one embodiment.

FIGS. 10A-10E illustrate an example of a PCNL process that includes a ureteroscope including an electromagnetic sensor to identify the location of a stone, according to one embodiment.

FIGS. 11A-11D show example graphs illustrating on-the-fly registration of an EM system to a 3D model of a path through a tubular network, according to one embodiment.

Reference will now be made in detail to several embodiments, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying figures. It is noted that wherever practicable similar or like reference numbers may be used in the figures and may indicate similar or like functionality. The figures depict embodiments of the described system (or method) for purposes of illustration only. One skilled in the art will readily recognize from the following description that alternative embodiments of the structures and methods illustrated herein may be employed without departing from the principles described herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

I. Overview

I.A. Surgical Robotics System

FIG. 1A shows an example surgical robotic system **100**, according to one embodiment. The surgical robotic system

100 includes a base **101** coupled to one or more robotic arms, e.g., robotic arm **102**. The base **101** is communicatively coupled to a command console, which is further described with reference to FIG. 2. The base **101** can be positioned such that the robotic arm **102** has access to perform a surgical procedure on a patient, while a user such as a physician may control the surgical robotic system **100** from the comfort of the command console. In some embodiments, the base **101** may be coupled to a surgical operating table or bed for supporting the patient. Though not shown in FIG. 1 for purposes of clarity, the base **101** may include subsystems such as control electronics, pneumatics, power sources, optical sources, and the like. The robotic arm **102** includes multiple arm segments **110** coupled at joints **111**, which provides the robotic arm **102** multiple degrees of freedom, e.g., seven degrees of freedom corresponding to seven arm segments. The base **101** may contain a source of power **112**, pneumatic pressure **113**, and control and sensor electronics **114**—including components such as a central processing unit, data bus, control circuitry, and memory—and related actuators such as motors to move the robotic arm **102**. The electronics **114** in the base **101** may also process and transmit control signals communicated from the command console.

In some embodiments, the base **101** includes wheels **115** to transport the surgical robotic system **100**. Mobility of the surgical robotic system **100** helps accommodate space constraints in a surgical operating room as well as facilitate appropriate positioning and movement of surgical equipment. Further, the mobility allows the robotic arms **102** to be configured such that the robotic arms **102** do not interfere with the patient, physician, anesthesiologist, or any other equipment. During procedures, a user may control the robotic arms **102** using control devices such as the command console.

In some embodiments, the robotic arm **102** includes set up joints that use a combination of brakes and counter-balances to maintain a position of the robotic arm **102**. The counter-balances may include gas springs or coil springs. The brakes, e.g., fail safe brakes, may be include mechanical and/or electrical components. Further, the robotic arms **102** may be gravity-assisted passive support type robotic arms.

Each robotic arm **102** may be coupled to an instrument device manipulator (IDM) **117** using a mechanism changer interface (MCI) **116**. The IDM **117** can be removed and replaced with a different type of IDM, for example, a first type of IDM manipulates an endoscope, while a second type of IDM manipulates a laparoscope. The MCI **116** includes connectors to transfer pneumatic pressure, electrical power, electrical signals, and optical signals from the robotic arm **102** to the IDM **117**. The MCI **116** can be a set screw or base plate connector. The IDM **117** manipulates surgical instruments (also referred to as surgical tools) such as the endoscope **118** using techniques including direct drive, harmonic drive, geared drives, belts and pulleys, magnetic drives, and the like. The MCI **116** is interchangeable based on the type of IDM **117** and can be customized for a certain type of surgical procedure. The robotic **102** arm can include a joint level torque sensing and a wrist at a distal end, such as the KUKA AG® LBR5 robotic arm. [0046]

An endoscope **118** is a tubular and flexible surgical instrument that is inserted into the anatomy of a patient to capture images of the anatomy (e.g., body tissue). In particular, the endoscope **118** includes one or more imaging devices (e.g., cameras or other types of optical sensors) that

capture the images. The imaging devices may include one or more optical components such as an optical fiber, fiber array, or lens. The optical components move along with the tip of the endoscope **118** such that movement of the tip of the endoscope **118** results in changes to the images captured by the imaging devices. An example endoscope **118** is further described with reference to FIGS. 3A-4B in Section IV. Endoscope.

Robotic arms **102** of the surgical robotic system **100** manipulate the endoscope **118** using elongate movement members. The elongate movement members may include pull wires, also referred to as pull or push wires, cables, fibers, or flexible shafts. For example, the robotic arms **102** actuate multiple pull wires coupled to the endoscope **118** to deflect the tip of the endoscope **118**. The pull wires may include both metallic and non-metallic materials such as stainless steel, Kevlar, tungsten, carbon fiber, and the like. The endoscope **118** may exhibit nonlinear behavior in response to forces applied by the elongate movement members. The nonlinear behavior may be based on stiffness and compressibility of the endoscope **118**, as well as variability in slack or stiffness between different elongate movement members.

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of a surgical robotics system **100A** with column-mounted robotic arms according to one embodiment. The surgical robotics system **100A** includes a set of robotic arms **102**, a set of column rings, table **119**, column **121**, and base **123**.

The table **119** provides support for a patient undergoing surgery using the surgical robotics system **100**. Generally, the table **119** is parallel to the ground, though the table **119** may change its orientation and configuration to facilitate a variety of surgical procedures. The table may be rotated around the patient's transverse axis or tilted along the patient's longitudinal axis using one or more pivots between the table **119** and the column **121**. The table **119** may include swivel segments, foldable segments, or both to change the configuration of an upper surface of the table **119** that supports the patient. The table **119** may include a trapdoor to facilitate drainage of bodily fluids or other ensuing fluids during surgical procedures.

The column **121** is coupled to the table **119** on one end and coupled to the base **123** on the other end. Generally, the column **121** is cylindrically shaped to accommodate one or more column rings **105** coupled to the column **121**; however, the column **121** may have other shapes such as oval or rectangular. A column ring **105** is movably coupled to the column. For example, a column ring **105** translates vertically along the axis of the column **121**, rotates horizontally around the axis of the column **121**, or both. Column rings **105** are described in more detail with respect to FIG. 2 below. The column may be rotated around the column's central axis relative to the base **123** using a rotation mechanism.

The base **123** is parallel to the ground and provides support for the column **121** and the table **119**. The base **123** may include wheels, treads, or other means of positioning or transporting the surgical robotics system **100**. The base **123** may accommodate the set of robotic arms **102**, the one or more column rings **105**, or both as part of an inactive configuration for storage, such as inside a removable housing (not shown). The base **123** may include rails (not shown) along which robotic arms **102** may be movably coupled as an alternative or supplement to column rings **105**.

Generally, the set of robotics arms includes one or more robotic arms **102** coupled to one or more column rings **105**, such as column ring **105A**. A robotic arm **102** attached to a column **105** may be referred to as a column-mounted robotic

arm **102**. The surgical robotics system **100A** uses robotic arms **102** to perform surgical procedures on a patient lying on the table **119**.

Further details and configurations regarding table **119**, column **121**, base **123**, column ring **105**, and robotic arm **102** are included in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/154,765, filed May 13, 2016, as well as in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/154,762, filed May 13, 2016, each of which is incorporated by reference herein. For example, an alternative surgical robotics system includes a first robotic arm **102** mounted to a column ring **105** and a second robotic arm mounted to a rail included in the base **123**.

FIG. 2 shows an example command console **200** for the example surgical robotic system **100**, according to one embodiment. The command console **200** includes a console base **201**, display modules **202**, e.g., monitors, and control modules, e.g., a keyboard **203** and joystick **204**. In some embodiments, one or more of the command console **200** functionality may be integrated into a base **101** of the surgical robotic system **100** or another system communicatively coupled to the surgical robotic system **100**. A user **205**, e.g., a physician, remotely controls the surgical robotic system **100** from an ergonomic position using the command console **200**.

The console base **201** may include the basic components of a computer system, that is a central processing unit (i.e., a computer processor), a memory/data storage unit, a data bus, and associated data communication ports that are responsible for interpreting and processing signals such as imagery and alignment sensor data, e.g., from the endoscope **118** shown in FIG. 1. In some embodiments, both the console base **201** and the base **101** perform signal processing for load-balancing. The console base **201** may also process commands and instructions provided by the user **205** through the control modules **203** and **204**. In addition to the keyboard **203** and joystick **204** shown in FIG. 2, the control modules may include other devices, for example, computer mice, trackpads, trackballs, control pads, video game controllers, and sensors (e.g., motion sensors or cameras) that capture hand gestures and finger gestures.

The user **205** can control a surgical instrument such as the endoscope **118** using the command console **200** in a velocity mode or position control mode. In velocity mode, the user **205** directly controls pitch and yaw motion of a distal end of the endoscope **118** based on direct manual control using the control modules. For example, movement on the joystick **204** may be mapped to yaw and pitch movement in the distal end of the endoscope **118**. The joystick **204** can provide haptic feedback to the user **205**. For example, the joystick **204** vibrates to indicate that the endoscope **118** cannot further translate or rotate in a certain direction. The command console **200** can also provide visual feedback (e.g., pop-up messages) and/or audio feedback (e.g., beeping) to indicate that the endoscope **118** has reached maximum translation or rotation.

In position control mode, the command console **200** uses a three-dimensional (3D) map of a patient and pre-determined computer models of the patient to control a surgical instrument, e.g., the endoscope **118**. The command console **200** provides control signals to robotic arms **102** of the surgical robotic system **100** to manipulate the endoscope **118** to a target location. Due to the reliance on the 3D map, position control mode requires accurate mapping of the anatomy of the patient.

In some embodiments, users **205** can manually manipulate robotic arms **102** of the surgical robotic system **100** without using the command console **200**. During setup in a

surgical operating room, the users **205** may move the robotic arms **102**, endoscopes **118**, and other surgical equipment to access a patient. The surgical robotic system **100** may rely on force feedback and inertia control from the users **205** to determine appropriate configuration of the robotic arms **102** and equipment.

The display modules **202** may include electronic monitors, virtual reality viewing devices, e.g., goggles or glasses, and/or other means of display devices. In some embodiments, the display modules **202** are integrated with the control modules, for example, as a tablet device with a touchscreen. Further, the user **205** can both view data and input commands to the surgical robotic system **100** using the integrated display modules **202** and control modules. The display modules **202** allow for display of graphical GUIs that may display information about the position and orientation of various instruments operating within the patient based on information provided by one or more alignment sensors. This information may be received by electrical wires or transmitters coupled to the sensors, which transmit the information to the console base **201**, which processes the information for presentation via the display modules **202**.

The display modules **202** can display 3D images using a stereoscopic device, e.g., a visor or goggle. The 3D images provide an “endo view” (i.e., endoscopic view), which is a computer 3D model illustrating the anatomy of a patient. The endo view provides a virtual environment of the patient’s interior and an expected location of an endoscope **118** inside the patient. A user **205** compares the endo view model to actual images captured by a camera to help mentally orient and confirm that the endoscope **118** is in the correct—or approximately correct—location within the patient. The endo view provides information about anatomical structures, e.g., the shape of an intestine or colon of the patient, around the distal end of the endoscope **118**. The display modules **202** can simultaneously display the 3D model and computerized tomography (CT) scans of the anatomy the around distal end of the endoscope **118**. Further, the display modules **202** may overlay the already determined navigation paths of the endoscope **118** on the 3D model and CT scans.

In some embodiments, a model of the endoscope **118** is displayed with the 3D models to help indicate a status of a surgical procedure. For example, the CT scans identify a lesion in the anatomy where a biopsy may be necessary. During operation, the display modules **202** may show a reference image captured by the endoscope **118** corresponding to the current location of the endoscope **118**. The display modules **202** may automatically display different views of the model of the endoscope **118** depending on user settings and a particular surgical procedure. For example, the display modules **202** show an overhead fluoroscopic view of the endoscope **118** during a navigation step as the endoscope **118** approaches an operative region of a patient.

I.B. Endoscope

FIG. 3A illustrates multiple degrees of motion of an endoscope **118** according to one embodiment. As shown in FIG. 3A, the tip **301** of the endoscope **118** is oriented with zero deflection relative to a longitudinal axis **306** (also referred to as a roll axis **306**). To capture images at different orientations of the tip **301**, a surgical robotic system **100** deflects the tip **301** on a positive yaw axis **302**, negative yaw axis **303**, positive pitch axis **304**, negative pitch axis **305**, or roll axis **306**. The tip **301** or body **310** of the endoscope **118** may be elongated or translated in the longitudinal axis **306**, x-axis **308**, or y-axis **309**.

The endoscope **118** includes a reference structure **307** to calibrate the position of the endoscope **118**. For example, the surgical robotic system **100** measures deflection of the endoscope **118** relative to the reference structure **307**. The reference structure **307** is located on a proximal end of the endoscope **118** and may include a key, slot, or flange. The reference structure **307** is coupled to a first drive mechanism for initial calibration and coupled to a second drive mechanism, e.g., the IDM **117**, to perform a surgical procedure.

FIG. 3B is a top view of an endoscope **118** according to one embodiment. The endoscope **118** includes a leader **315** tubular component (or leaderscope) nested or partially nested inside and longitudinally-aligned with a sheath **311** tubular component. The sheath **311** includes a proximal sheath section **312** and distal sheath section **313**. The leader **315** has a smaller outer diameter than the sheath **311** and includes a proximal leader section **316** and distal leader section **317**. The sheath base **314** and the leader base **318** actuate the distal sheath section **313** and the distal leader section **317**, respectively, for example, based on control signals from a user of a surgical robotic system **100**. The sheath base **314** and the leader base **318** are, e.g., part of the IDM **117** shown in FIG. 1.

Both the sheath base **314** and the leader base **318** include drive mechanisms (e.g., the independent drive mechanism further described with reference to FIG. 3D in Section I.C. Instrument Device Manipulator) to control pull wires coupled to the sheath **311** and leader **315**. For example, the sheath base **314** generates tensile loads on pull wires coupled to the sheath **311** to deflect the distal sheath section **313**. Similarly, the leader base **318** generates tensile loads on pull wires coupled to the leader **315** to deflect the distal leader section **317**. Both the sheath base **314** and leader base **318** may also include couplings for the routing of pneumatic pressure, electrical power, electrical signals, or optical signals from IDMs to the sheath **311** and leader **314**, respectively. A pull wire may include a steel coil pipe along the length of the pull wire within the sheath **311** or the leader **315**, which transfers axial compression back to the origin of the load, e.g., the sheath base **314** or the leader base **318**, respectively.

The endoscope **118** can navigate the anatomy of a patient with ease due to the multiple degrees of freedom provided by pull wires coupled to the sheath **311** and the leader **315**. For example, four or more pull wires may be used in either the sheath **311** and/or the leader **315**, providing eight or more degrees of freedom. In other embodiments, up to three pull wires may be used, providing up to six degrees of freedom. The sheath **311** and leader **315** may be rotated up to 360 degrees along a longitudinal axis **306**, providing more degrees of motion. The combination of rotational angles and multiple degrees of freedom provides a user of the surgical robotic system **100** with a user friendly and instinctive control of the endoscope **118**.

FIG. 3C is an isometric view of the distal end of leader **315** of an endoscope **118** according to one embodiment. The leader **315** includes at least one working channel **343** and pull wires and running through conduits along the length of the walls. For example, the pull wires and may have a helix section that helps mitigate muscling and curve alignment of the leader **315**. The leader **315** includes an imaging device **349** (e.g., charge-coupled device (CCD) or complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) camera, imaging fiber bundle, etc.), light sources **350** (e.g., light-emitting diode (LED), optic fiber, etc.), and at least one working channel **343** for other components. For example, other components include camera wires, an insufflation device, a suction

device, electrical wires, fiber optics, an ultrasound transducer, electromagnetic (EM) sensing components, and optical coherence tomography (OCT) sensing components. In some embodiments, the leader 315 includes a cavity that runs along the long axis of the leader 315 to form a working channel 343 which accommodates insertion of other devices such as surgical tools.

I.C. Instrument Device Manipulator

FIG. 3D is an isometric view of an instrument device manipulator 117 of the surgical robotic system 100 according to one embodiment. The robotic arm 102 is coupled to the IDM 117 via an articulating interface 301. The IDM 117 is coupled to the endoscope 118. The articulating interface 301 may transfer pneumatic pressure, power signals, control signals, and feedback signals to and from the robotic arm 15 102 and the IDM 117. The IDM 117 may include a gear head, motor, rotary encoder, power circuits, and control circuits. A base 303 for receiving control signals from the IDM 117 is coupled to the proximal end of the endoscope 118. Responsive to the control signals, the IDM 117 manipulates the endoscope 118 by actuating output shafts, which are further described below with reference to FIG. 3E.

FIG. 3E is an exploded isometric view of the instrument device manipulator shown in FIG. 3D according to one embodiment. In FIG. 3E, the endoscope 118 has been removed from the IDM 117 to reveal the output shafts 305, 306, 307, and 308 which may each control independent pull wires of an endoscope 118 or basket apparatus as described further below.

II. Lower Body Surgery

FIG. 4A is a perspective view of a surgical robotics system 400A with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of a simulated patient 408 according to one embodiment. The surgical robotics system 400A includes a set of robotic arms (including five robotic arms in total) and a set of three column rings. A first robotic arm 470A and a second robotic arm 470B are coupled to a first column ring 405A. A third robotic arm 470C and a fourth robotic arm 470D are coupled to a second column ring 405B. A fifth robotic arm 470E is coupled to a third column ring 405C. FIG. 4A shows a wireframe of the patient 408 lying on the table 401 undergoing a surgical procedure, e.g., ureteroscopy, involving access to the lower body area of the patient 408. Legs of the patient 408 are not shown in order to avoid obscuring portions of the surgical robotics system 400A.

The surgical robotics system 400A configures the set of robotic arms to perform a surgical procedure on the lower body area of the patient 408. Specifically, the surgical robotics system 400A configures the set of robotic arms to manipulate a surgical instrument 410. The set of robotic arms insert the surgical instrument 410 along a virtual rail 490 into the groin area of the patient 408. Generally, a virtual rail 490 is a co-axial trajectory along which the set of robotic arms translates a surgical instrument (e.g., a telescoping instrument). The second robotic arm 470B, the third robotic arm 470C, and the fifth robotic arm 470E are coupled, e.g., holding, the surgical instrument 410. The first robotic arm 470A and the fourth robotic arm 470D are stowed to the sides of the surgical robotics system because they are not necessarily required to for the surgical procedure—or at least part of the surgical procedure—shown in FIG. 4A. The robotic arms are configured such that they manipulate the surgical instrument 410 from a distance away from the patient 408. This is advantageous, for example, because there is often limited space available closer toward the patient's body or there is a sterile boundary around the

patient 408. Further, there may also be a sterile drape around surgical equipment. During a surgical procedure, only sterile objects are allowed pass the sterile boundary. Thus, the surgical robotics system 400A may still use robotic arms that are positioned outside of the sterile boundary and that are covered with sterilized drapes to perform a surgical procedure.

In one embodiment, the surgical robotics system 400A configures the set of robotic arms to perform an endoscopy surgical procedure on the patient 408. The set of robotic arms hold an endoscope, e.g., the surgical instrument 410. The set of robotic arms insert the endoscope into the patient's body via an opening in the groin area of the patient 408. The endoscope is a flexible, slender, and tubular instrument with optical components such as a camera and optical cable. The optical components collect data representing images of portions inside the patient's body. A user of the surgical robotics system 400A uses the data to assist with performing the endoscopy.

FIG. 4B is a top view of the surgical robotics system 400A with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of the patient 408 according to one embodiment.

FIG. 4C is a perspective view of an imaging device 440 and a surgical robotics system 400B with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of a patient 408 according to one embodiment. The surgical robotics system 400B includes a pair of stirrups 420 that support the legs of the patient 408 in order to expose the groin area of the patient 408. Generally, the imaging device 440 captures images of body parts or other objects inside a patient 408. The imaging device 440 may be a C-arm, also referred to as a mobile C-arm, which is often used for fluoroscopy type surgical procedures, or another type of imaging device. A C-arm includes a generator, detector, and imaging system (not shown). The generator is coupled to the bottom end of the C-arm and faces upward toward the patient 408. The detector is coupled to the top end of the C-arm and faces downward toward the patient 408. The generator emits X-ray waves toward the patient 408. The X-ray waves penetrate the patient 408 and are received by the detector. Based on the received X-ray waves, the imaging system 440 generates the images of body parts or other objects inside the patient 408. The swivel segment 210 of the table 119 is rotated laterally such that the groin area of the patient 408 is aligned in between the generator and detector of the C-arm imaging device 440. The C-arm is a physically large device with a footprint stationed underneath the patient during use. In particular, the generator of the C-arm is disposed underneath the operative area of the patient, e.g., the abdomen area. In typical surgical beds mounted to a column, the column interferes with the positioning of the C-arm generator, e.g., because the column is also underneath the operative area. In contrast, due to the configurability of the swivel segment 210, the surgical robotics system 400B may configure the table 119 such that the C-arm, the robotic arms, and a user (e.g., physician) have a sufficient range of access to perform a surgical procedure on a working area the patient's body. In one example use case, the table 119 is translated laterally along a longitudinal axis of the table 119 such that the robotic arms can access the groin or lower abdomen area of a patient on the table 119. In another example use case, by rotating the swivel segment 210 away from the column 121, the generator of the C-arm 440 may be positioned underneath the groin area of the patient 408. The swivel segment 210—with a patient lying on the swivel segment 210—may be rotated at least to 15 degrees relative to a longitudinal axis of the table 119 without tipping over

the surgical robotics system. In particular, the surgical robotics system does not tip because the center of mass of the surgical robotics system (e.g., the center of mass of the combined, at least, table, bed, and base) is positioned above a footprint of the base.

The surgical robotics system **400B** uses a set of column-mounted robotic arms to manipulate a surgical instrument **410**. Each of the robotic arms is coupled to, e.g., holding, the surgical instrument **410**. The surgical robotics system **400B** uses the robotic arms to insert the surgical instrument **410** into the groin area of the patient along a virtual rail **490**.

FIG. 4D is a top view of the imaging device **440** and the surgical robotics system **400B** with column-mounted arms configured to access the lower body area of the patient **408** according to one embodiment.

III. Basket Apparatus

Referring now to FIGS. 5A to 5F, a robotically steerable basket apparatus is described. FIG. 5A is a side view of the basket apparatus. FIGS. 5B and 5C illustrate how the basket apparatus may be used to capture an object, such as a urinary stone, according to one embodiment. The robotically steerable basket apparatus **500** may be operatively and removably coupled to any of the IDMs described herein and above, such as IDM **117** described above. The robotically steerable basket apparatus **500** may be advanced through a natural or artificially created orifice in a subject or patient to capture a target object within the body of the subject or patient. For instance, the robotically steerable basket apparatus **500** may be advanced with the robotic surgical system **100** through the urethra, and optionally the bladder, ureter, and/or the kidney to capture a kidney stone (ST). As another example, the robotically steerable basket apparatus **500** may be advanced into the gallbladder to capture a gallstone. In some embodiments, the robotically steerable basket apparatus **500** may be advanced through another working channel of a catheter, ureteroscope, endoscope, or similar device (e.g., within a 1.2 mm diameter working channel). In those embodiments, the addition of an endoscopic instrument may provide axial support and stiffness, while also delivering additional features, such as vision, navigation, and localization capabilities, to the apparatus.

The robotically steerable basket apparatus **500** may include a handle or tool base **510** adapted to removably and operatively couple with the IDM **117**. The tool base **510** may include a number of capstans **520** to couple to the output shafts or drive units of the IDM so that the IDM can actuate the capstans **520** as well as other actuation elements coupled thereto. The basket apparatus **500** further includes a number of pull wires (also referred to as tendons) **530**. The pull wires **530** are coupled to the capstans **520** at one end. The pull wires **530** run straight along the long axis of the apparatus **500**, and are prevented from sagging or twisting by an outer support shaft **540**. The outer support shaft **540** may include a plurality of lumens and channels through which the pull wires **530** may traverse along the direction of the long axis of the apparatus **500**. The outer support shaft **540** may be flexible to facilitate advancement of the basket apparatus **500** through a tortuous tissue tract or bodily channel, such as the urethra and ureter. The apparatus **500** may also include an internal shaft **560** for axial stiffness and support. The apparatus **500** may be configured to be inserted into the working channel of an instrument such as an endoscope **118**.

The pull wires **530** may be coupled to one another at the distal-most tip **552** of the basket apparatus **500**. For example, the basket apparatus **500** may include two different pairs of pull wires **530**, with each pull wire pair forming a loop with the tips of the loops coupled to one another at tip

552 and each pull wire having its two ends threaded through opposite peripheral channels or lumens **548** of the outer support shaft **540**. The two tips of the looped pull wires may be coupled together in any number of ways. For example, they may be soldered together, crimped together, braided together, bonded together with an adhesive, tied together with a suture or other thread, etc. Once connected together, each pair of pull wires forming a loop can also be referred to as a single pull wire, if that terminology is preferred in a particular implementation.

When the tool base **510** is coupled to an IDM, the capstans **520** may actuate the pull wires **530** so that the pull wires **530** can be translated proximally or distally in the axial (long axis) direction, such as relative to the outer support shaft **540**. One or more of the pull wire **530** may be translated independently from one another, such as by their respective capstans **520**.

The distal ends of the pull wires **530** may extend from the distal end **544** of the outer support shaft **540** to form a distal wire basket **550**. The distal ends of the pull wires **530** may be retracted by the capstans **520** located at the proximal end **542** of the outer support shaft **540** to collapse the basket **550** into the outer support shaft **540**. Retraction of the basket **550** into the outer support shaft **540** can lower the profile of the basket apparatus **500** to facilitate the advancement of the basket apparatus **500** into a tissue tract or bodily channel. In some embodiments, the apparatus **500** may be deployed through a working channel of an endoscopic device, wherein the apparatus **500** may be retracted relative to the endoscopic device in order to similarly lower the profile of the basket apparatus **500**. Conversely, the capstans **520** may be actuated to extend the pull wires **530** out from the outer support shaft **540** so that the basket **550** may expand. For instance, once the distal end **544** of the outer support shaft **540** is positioned near a stone ST, the basket **550** may be expanded to capture the stone ST.

The basket **550** may be extended from outer support shaft **540** at different amounts of extension to vary the size of the basket **550**. For instance, as illustrated in FIGS. 5B and 5C, the basket **550** may initially be extended to an enlarged size to capture the stone ST within the basket **550** and then the basket **550** may be partially collapsed (i.e., reduced in size) to secure the stone within the basket **550**. As further shown in FIG. 5B, the pull wires **530** may be selectively actuated to steer or tip the basket **550** to facilitate capture of the stone ST. The outer support shaft **540** may be held stationary relative to the pull wires **530** while the pull wires **530** are differentially actuated. The basket **550** may be steered in any number of directions by the differential actuation of the individual pull wires **530** such that it has a 360° range of motion. For example, one end of an individual pull wire **530** may be held stationary while the other end is pulled or pushed to tip the basket **550** toward or away from the moving end, respectively. In other examples, the individual ends of the pull wires **530** may be differentially pulled, pushed, or held stationary to vary the degree and/or direction of the tipping.

The degree of movement of the capstans **520** may be indicative of the degree and/or direction of the tipping of the basket **550** and also of its current size. Therefore, in some embodiments, the robotic system, and the IDM in particular, can determine and/or track the current configuration of the basket **550** positioned within a subject or patient's body based on the feedback or information from the capstans **520**, the drive unit(s), or output shaft(s) and without visualization of the basket **550**. Alternatively or in combination, the basket **550** may be visualized to determine and/or track its

current configuration. The pull wires **530** may be formed from a shape memory material or metal (e.g., a Nickel-Titanium alloy such as Nitinol) so that the distal ends of the pull wires **530** may be biased to assume the basket shape when unconstrained and/or at body temperature.

FIGS. **5D**, **5E**, **5F** illustrate different views of an embodiment that is intended for use within the working channel of an endoscopic device. FIG. **5D** illustrates a perspective view of the outer support shaft of the basket apparatus, while FIG. **5E** illustrates a close up side view of the outer support shaft. As shown in FIG. **5E**, the outer support shaft **540** may have a square or diamond shaped cross-section. Other shapes such as a circle, ellipse, oval, triangle, quadrilateral, rectangle, pentagon, star, hexagon, and other polygonal shapes for the cross-section of the outer support shaft **540** are also contemplated. The outer support shaft **540** may include a central working channel **546** and a plurality of peripheral channels **548**. The pull wires **530** may be positioned within the peripheral channels **548**. A guide wire, a further therapeutic device (such as a laser fiber for lithotripsy), or a diagnostic device (such as an imaging device or a camera) may be advanced through the central channel **546** to reach a target area or object, such as a captured stone ST.

The outer support shaft **540** may also comprise a plurality of rounded vertices or corners **543** where the peripheral channels **548** are located and through which the pull wires **530** travel. Slotted lateral edges **541** on the outer surface of the outer support shaft **540** may be concave, and thus at least partially curved around the corners **543** where the peripheral channels **548** are located so as to define a plurality of elongate lateral slots or channels of the outer support shaft **540**. These slotted lateral edges **541** may facilitate advancement of the basket apparatus **500** by discouraging apposition of tissue to the edges of the outer support shaft. When the basket apparatus **500** is positioned through a tissue tract, bodily channel, or the working channel of an endoscopic device, the slotted lateral edges **541** may provide sufficient space to allow fluid irrigation and/or aspiration between the outer support shaft **540** and the inner walls of the tissue tract, bodily channel, or working channel.

FIG. **5F** shows a perspective view of a robotically steerable basket apparatus, such as the device in FIG. **5D**, zoomed in to illustrate the distal end **544** of the outer support shaft **540** with the pull wires exiting the peripheral channels **548** according to one embodiment.

FIGS. **6A-6C** show example shapes for the expanded basket, according to one embodiment. When the basket **550** is expanded (e.g., not entirely collapsed with the outer support shaft **540**, or extended past the distal end of an endoscopic device), it may have any number of shapes, such as an elliptical shape as shown in FIG. **5A**. As an alternative, FIG. **6A** illustrates an embodiment where the basket **550B** has a spherical shape. As another alternative, FIG. **6B** illustrates an embodiment where the basket **550B** is shaped to have the pull wires have a semi- or fully rigid indentation **554** so as to form the shape of “jaws” for improved reaching capabilities within tortuous anatomy. As another alternative, FIG. **6C** illustrates an embodiment where the basket **550C** is formed of spiral or helically shaped pull wires for alternative reaching capabilities within tortuous anatomy.

FIGS. **7A-7E** illustrate various techniques for using the basket apparatus to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment. The captured stone may be broken apart in many ways.

FIG. **7A** illustrates insertion of a laser or optical fiber to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment. The captured stone ST may be broken apart with laser or

optical energy, referred to as laser lithotripsy. In such a case, a laser or optical fiber **562** is introduced from the tool base or handle **510** and advanced through the central working channel **546** so that a laser tip or optical element is positioned at the proximal end of the basket **550**. The central working channel **546** may have an appropriate size to accommodate the laser or optical fiber, such as 100-300 μm in diameter. The laser or optical fiber may convey laser or light energy to be directed by the laser tip or optical element to break apart the captured stone ST. Alternatively or in combination, a fluid may be flushed through or aspirated through the central working channel **546**. Alternatively, a fluid may be flushed through or aspirated through slotted lateral edges **541** as discussed with respect to FIG. **5E**.

The captured stone ST may be broken apart mechanically in many ways as well. For example, ultrasound may be applied such as through the central channel **546** (not shown). Alternatively or in combination, a mechanical device may be advanced through the central channel **546** and the mechanical device may be used to break apart the captured stone.

FIG. **7B** illustrates insertion of a mechanical drill to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment. The mechanical drill bit **564** is advanced through the central working channel **546** of the outer support shaft **540**. A rotating motor, located proximal to the tool base **510**, rotates the drill bit **564** at the basket **550** to break apart the captured stone ST.

FIGS. **7C** and **7D** illustrate use of a chisel to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment. In the embodiment of FIG. **7C**, the chisel **566** is advanced through the central working channel **546** of the outer support shaft **540**. The chisel **566** is actuated with a reciprocating motor (not shown) located proximal to the tool base **510**. The reciprocating motor may drive the chisel **566** axially in the proximal and distal directions. In the embodiment of FIG. **7D**, the chisel **566** is provided from a device separate from the apparatus **500**, and thus is not advanced through the basket apparatus **500**, to break apart the captured stone ST from another direction such as the distal direction. In this case, the working channel **546** of the basket apparatus **500** may be used to evacuate stone fragments.

FIG. **7E** illustrate use of a high pressure fluid jet **580** to break up a captured stone, according to one embodiment. The high pressure fluid jet **5280** may be water, saline, or another liquid ejected from a fluid source. The fluid jet may be abrasive and comprise particulates such as salt particles to facilitate stone destruction. An example implementation may have a pressure of 400 psi and a 100 μm diameter on the central working channel **546** from which the fluid jet exits towards the stone ST.

The captured stone ST may be steered by the basket **550** while the captured stone ST is being broken apart. Once the captured stone ST is broken apart in any of the ways described, the broken apart stone ST may be aspirated through the central channel **546** and/or the broken apart stone ST may be secured by the basket **550** (such as in a lower profile than if the whole stone ST were secured) to be retracted from the target site (e.g., ureter, renal pelvis, gallbladder, etc.). In some embodiments, the broken apart portions of the captured stone ST may be aspirated while the basket **550** continues to capture and secure the larger portions of the captured stone ST that have not yet been broken apart.

IV. Process for Capturing Stones in a Basket Apparatus

IV.A. Problem

Basketing is a technique frequently used by urologists to remove urinary stones or stone fragments from the urinary tract. The current state of the art generally requires at least two experienced operator to control the ureteroscope and the basket apparatus in tandem. Procedure time and clinical outcome can be negatively impacted if one or more of the operators lack sufficient experience.

Current procedure for removing urinary stones involves advancing a ureteroscope into the ureter via the urethra and bladder. The ureteroscope is positioned approximately close to a urinary stone. During a basketing phase of the operation, a basket is advanced through the ureteroscope and may capture the urinary stone with its basket to extract the stone. With the ureteroscope positioned at the stone, the urologist has several potential workflow options for moving the stone. If the stone is small enough that the operator is able to capture the entire stone in the basket, then both the ureteroscope and the basket are withdrawn back to the bladder or outside the subject. If the stone is too big to withdraw in one pass, a laser (Holmium or neodymium-doped yttrium aluminum garnet (ND:YAG)) or a electrohydraulic lithotripsy (EHL) device can be passed through a central working channel of the ureteroscope and used to fragment the stone into smaller pieces. One operator can then exchange the laser fiber or EHL probe for the basket and can extract each stone fragment in turn to the bladder or outside the patient. If the stone is located in the proximal (relative to the center of the body of the subject) ureter or inside the kidney itself, a sheath can be used to enable rapid extraction and introduction of the ureteroscope and the basket.

Such a procedure requires two operators. The primary operator controls the ureteroscope and the secondary operator controls the basket or any other inserted tools such as the laser. Both the primary operator and the secondary operator can be looking at a visual feed from a ureteroscope camera.

FIGS. 8A-8C illustrate a significant challenge that can face operators during a basketing operation, according to one embodiment. In FIG. 8A, assume that the operator has advanced through the basketing phase to the point where the stone ST is now located within the open (i.e., unclosed or un-retracted) basket 802, by navigation of the basket, where the basket has been advanced out of the ureteroscope 805. Despite being located around the stone ST prior to retraction, retracting the basket 802 so that the stone ST is trapped in the basket 802 when the basket 802 is retracted is a significant challenge. This can be difficult because the center 811 of the basket 802 can retract laterally along the long axis of the basket as the operator closes the basket 802. In this scenario, if the operator initially positions the basket 802 center 811 over the stone ST (FIG. 8A) and closes or collapses the basket 802 (FIG. 8B), the basket 802 frequently retracts past the stone ST (see moved center 811 of the basket 802) and fails to trap it (FIG. 8C).

IV.B. Manual Process

FIGS. 8D-8F illustrate a process for overcoming the challenge in basketing a stone, according to one embodiment. In this process, two operators work together to advance the ureteroscope 805 and/or the basket 802 in tandem as the basket 802 is closed to ensure the stone ST is trapped. FIG. 8D shows the basket 802 expanded and positioned to enclose the stone ST. FIG. 8E shows the basket 802 being collapsed while either the ureteroscope 805 or the basket apparatus (not explicitly shown, enclosed by the ureteroscope 805) is advanced, thereby holding the center 811 position of the basket in place relative to the stone ST.

The ureteroscope 805 or basket apparatus may be moved relative to the pull wires through motion of either instrument as a whole by the operator. FIG. 8F shows the stone ST securely captured or trapped by the basket 802. After capture, the stone may be extracted from the patient by retracting the basket and/or the ureteroscope from the patient.

While the procedure above allows a stone ST to be more reliably captured, such a procedure typically requires two or more well trained operators who must work together with a high degree of coordination. For example, a first operator may be tasked with collapsing the basket with a first controller while a second operator may be tasked with advancing the basket apparatus with a second controller.

IV.C. Robotic Process

Robotic control can simplify the basketing phase operation, thus reducing the complexity of the procedure, the time to perform it. Robotic control also removes the need for more than one operator to be present to coordinate and accomplish the basketing phase.

FIGS. 9A-9F illustrate a process for positioning and controlling a basket apparatus to trap stones (and stone fragments) during a robotically assisted ureteroscopy intervention, according to one embodiment. The surgical robotics system 100 includes a robotically controllable ureteroscope 805 which itself includes a sheath component 815, a leader component (or leaderscope) 825, and a basket 802. Throughout the process, aspiration and irrigation/fluid transfer may be performed through the space between the leader and sheath through port 835, and/or they may be performed through the working channel of the ureteroscope, and through the slotted edges of an inserted basketing apparatus as described with respect to FIG. 5E above.

The system further includes at least two robotic arms 102A and 102B which are configured to control the position, orientation and tip articulation of the sheath 815 and leader 825, through instrument bases 801A and 801B for the sheath 815 and leader 825 respectively. In this example, at least one additional robotic arm 102C having a tool base 102C is configured to control the position and basket actuation of the basket 802. The system 100 may further include a graphical user interface suitable for controlling the ureteroscope 805 and basket 802, and a control system suitable for taking command inputs from the user interface and servoing the appropriate motor of the appropriate arm 102. The arms 102A-C, particularly their bases 801A-C, may be aligned in a virtual rail configuration.

To carry out the process of the operation, the system 100 steers the robotic ureteroscope 805 (for example, either automatically or using operator input received via controls and displayed via the GUI) into position such that the stone ST can be visualized using a tip mounted camera (not shown) in the ureteroscope 805. As shown in FIG. 9B, the first 101A and second 101B instrument bases advance the sheath 815 and the leader 825, respectively, of the ureteroscope 805 relative to the patient in the directions indicated by a first arrow 830A and a second arrow 830B, respectively. The speed and magnitude of the motions of the sheath 815 and leader 825 may vary from each other, and the two parts may move independently from each other. The ureteroscope 805 is advanced through the bladder BL and the ureter UTR. As shown in FIG. 9C, the tool base 801C advances the basket 802 out of the working channel of the ureteroscope 805 in the direction indicated by a third arrow 830C. In one specific implementation of this process, an introducer, such as a rigid metal cystoscope, may be used to help insert the ureteroscope (sheath, leader, or both) into the patient's urethra.

As shown in FIG. 9D, the system commands the basket **802** to open and positions the basket **802** such that the stone ST is located in the center of the basket **802**. This may be accomplished, as shown by the fourth arrow **830D**, by advancing one or more of the pull wires of the basket **802** using the tool base **801C**, or using another arm/tool base (not shown) that separately controls the pull wires from the remainder of the basket apparatus. This may also be in part accomplished, as shown by the fifth arrow **830E**, by advancing the leader **825** using the second instrument base **801B**, which in turn repositions the basket **802** advanced out of the leader **825**.

As shown in FIG. 9E, the system then commands the basket **802** to close. This may be accomplished, as shown by the sixth arrow **830F**, by retracting the pull wires of the basket **802**, again using the tool base **801C** or using another arm/tool base (not shown) that separately controls the pull wires from the remainder of the basket apparatus. As the basket **802** closes, either the leader's **825** instrument base **801B** or the basket apparatus' tool base (not shown) may also simultaneously advance the leader **825** or the basket **802**, respectively, in the direction indicated by seventh arrow **830G** to maintain the stone ST in the center of the basket **802** while the basket is being closed until the stone ST is trapped.

As shown in FIG. 9F, once the stone ST is trapped, the system removes or retracts the basket apparatus **802** and leader **825**, according to the eighth **830H** and ninth **830I** arrows using the tool base **801C** and instrument base **801B**, respectively, from the subject so the stone ST can be fully extracted from the patient.

V. Process for Percutaneous Nephrolithotomy

V.A. Problem

Some ureteral stones are sufficiently large that removal via ureteroscopy is impractical. For example, stones can be greater than 2 centimeters in diameter, and generally the working channel of a ureteroscope through which a stone or fragment can be removed has a diameter of 1.2 millimeters. Although breaking stones into smaller fragments for removal via ureteroscopy does work in many instances, studies have shown that leftover stone debris is often the source of new stone formation, necessitating future similar treatments.

Percutaneous nephrolithotomy (PCNL), in contrast, is a process for stone removal whereby a surgeon cuts into the kidney from outside the body (rather than entering through the ureter) to provide a larger port for stone removal. As no ureteroscope is used to identify the location of the stone within a kidney, the location of the stone must be identified by other mechanisms. A common technique is to use traditional imaging techniques, such as a X-ray computed tomography (CT) scan or fluoroscopy using an intravenous pyelogram, to identify the location of the stone.

Having collected this information it is common for a urologist, who is trained to remove the stone, to ask a radiologist to perform the percutaneous cut to place a guide wire leading near the location of the stone in the kidney out through the cut and outside the body. The cut may be obtained by directing a nephrostomy needle into the patient's body, the nephrostomy needle comprising of a stylet and a cannula. Having directed the needle into the patient, the stylet may be removed, leaving the cannula to form an open port to the location of the kidney stone. Through the cannula, the urologist may then place the guide wire. The urologist can then use this wire to perform the remainder of the PCNL process to remove the stone. It is common for a urologist to ask a radiologist to place the guide wire instead of placing it themselves because radiolo-

gists are specifically trained to generate and interpret CT scans, fluoroscopy scans, and other types of imaging that are used to identify objects such as kidney stone. They are further skilled as conceptualizing the imagery information in three dimensional (3D) space to identify the location of an object such as a stone in that 3D space, and consequently are the most skilled at placing a guide wire according to that information.

To complete the PCNL, the urologist uses the placed guide wire to pass a deflated balloon or dilator along the wire. The urologist inflates the balloon or dilator to create a port large enough introduce a hollow suction tube, such as a nephrostomy tube, directly into the calyx of the kidney containing the stone. At this point a nephroscope or any one of a number of other instruments may be introduced into the suction tube to assist in removing the stone. For example, a stone breaker, laser, ultrasound, basket, grasper, drainage tube, etc. may be used to remove the stone or fragments thereof. Drainage tubes, such as nephrostomy catheters, may be deployed down the suction tube to reduce intra-renal pressure during and after the PCNL is completed.

PCNL is advantageous because it allows removal of larger stones than ureteroscopy, and it further allows for better flushing of leftover stone sediment, which helps reduce new stone formation and therefore decreases the frequency of similar follow up treatments being needed. However, PCNL is also a more aggressive treatment than ureteroscopy, requiring a minor surgery and a longer recovery period. Further, the common need for a radiologist to perform part of the procedure in conjunction with the urologist adds additional cost, complication, and operation scheduling time delay to a procedure that would ideally need only the urologist and their staff to perform. Further, PCNL requires the use of imaging techniques that are cumbersome and affecting on the persons involved in the procedure. For example, fluoroscopy requires the use of lead vests to reduce radiation uptake by hospital staff. Lead vests, however, do not eliminate all radiation, and are cumbersome to wear for long periods, and over the course of an entire career can cause orthopedic injury to the staff.

V.B. Process

To address these issues, the following section describes a new process for PCNL including an alignment sensor to identify the location of a stone or the target calyx of interest. FIGS. 10A-10E illustrate an example of this process where the alignment sensor is an electromagnetic (EM) sensor (or probe). In this process, the EM sensor is introduced into through the bladder BL into the ureter UTR and onward into the kidney KD. The EM sensor may be attached to a ureteroscope that includes an EM sensor **1010** proximal to the tip of the ureteroscope **1005**. Alternatively, the EM sensor may be as simple as a coil connected to an electrical wire running the length of the ureteroscope which is connected to an external computing device configured to interpret electrical signals generated at the coil and passed down the wire.

V.B.I. Pre-Operative Segmentation & Planning

A pre-operative planning process may be performed in order to plan the procedure and navigation of the robotic tools. The process includes performing a pre-operative computerized tomography (CT) scan of the operative region. The resulting CT scan generates a series of two-dimensional images that are used to generate a three-dimensional model of the anatomical pathways and organs. The process of partitioning a CT image(s) into constituent parts may be referred to as "segmentation." The segmented images are then analyzed by the system **100** to identify the locations in

three dimensional coordinate space of landmarks within or on the surface of the patient. For PCNL, this analysis may include identifying landmarks including any one or more of the skin, kidney stone(s), bone structures (e.g., ribs, vertebrae, pelvis, etc.), internal organs (e.g., kidneys, liver, colon, etc.), and external devices (e.g., skin patch sensor). After segmentation is complete, a means of localization (such as electromagnetic detection discussed below or intra-operative fluoroscopy) may be used in combination with the locations of identified landmarks and a registration method to provide a visual representation of the location of medical tools/instruments within the anatomy.

V.B.II. Electromagnetic Detection

Generally, an EM sensor, such as a coil, detect changes in EM fields as the operator moves the EM sensor **1010** in the kidney KD, for example by moving the ureteroscope tip while locating the stone ST. An implementation of the process using an EM sensor thus further includes a number of EM generators **1015** located externally to the patient. The EM generators **1015** emit EM fields that are picked up by the EM sensor **1010**. The different EM generators **1015** may be modulated in a number of different ways so that when their emitted fields are captured by the EM sensor **1010** and are processed by an external computer, their signals are separable so that the external computer can process them each as a separate input providing separate triangulation location regarding the location of the EM sensor **1010**, and by extension the location of the stone ST. For example, the EM generators may be modulated in time or in frequency, and may use orthogonal modulations so that each signal is fully separable from each other signal despite possibly overlapping in time. Further, the EM generators **1015** may be oriented relative to each other in Cartesian space at non-zero, non-orthogonal angles so that changes in orientation of the EM sensor will result in the EM sensor **1010** receiving at least some signal from at least one of the EM generators **1015** at any instant in time. For example, each EM generator may be, along any axis, offset at a small angle (e.g., 7 degrees) from each of two other EM generators. As many EM generators as desired may be used in this configuration to assure accurate EM sensor position information.

V.B.III. on-the-Fly Electromagnetic Registration

EM data is registered to an image of the patient captured with a different technique other than EM (or whatever mechanism is used to capture the alignment sensor's data), such as a CT scan, in order to establish a reference frame for the EM data. FIGS. **11A-11D** show example graphs illustrating on-the-fly registration of an EM system to a segmented 3D model generated by a CT scan of a path through a tubular network (e.g., from the bladder into a ureter into one of the kidneys), according to one embodiment.

FIGS. **11A-11D** show example graphs **1110-1140** illustrating on-the-fly registration of an EM system to a segmented 3D model of a path through a tubular network, according to one embodiment. In the example of FIG. **11A-11D**, the EM sensor is attached to an endoscope tip **1101**, however the principles of registration described with respect to these figures are equally applicable to the case where an EM sensor is attached to a guide wire and the 3D model is replaced with intra-operative fluoroscopy. In such an implementation, the 3D model discussed in the following sections is replaced with fluoroscopy that updates a representation of the patient in with each fluoroscopy update as the guide wire is progressed through the patient. Thus, insertion of the guide wire towards the kidney and registration of the guide wire to external EM generators occur at least partially simultaneously.

The navigation configuration system described herein allows for on-the-fly registration of the EM coordinates to the 3D model coordinates without the need for independent registration prior to an endoscopic procedure. In more detail, FIG. **11A** shows that the coordinate systems of the EM tracking system and the 3D model are initially not registered to each other, and the graph **1110** in FIG. **11A** shows the registered (or expected) location of an endoscope tip **1101** moving along a planned navigation path **1102** through a branched tubular network (not shown here), and the registered location of the instrument tip **1101** as well as the planned path **1102** are derived from the 3D model. The actual position of the tip is repeatedly measured by the EM tracking system **505**, resulting in multiple measured location data points **1103** based on EM data. As shown in FIG. **11A**, the data points **1103** derived from EM tracking are initially located far from the expected location of the endoscope tip **1101** from the 3D model, reflecting the lack of registration between the EM coordinates and the 3D model coordinates. There may be several reasons for this, for example, even if the endoscope tip is being moved relatively smoothly through the tubular network, there may still be some visible scatter in the EM measurement, due to breathing movement of the lungs of the patient.

The points on the 3D model may also be determined and adjusted based on correlation between the 3D model itself, image data received from optical sensors (e.g., cameras) and robot data from robot commands. The 3D transformation between these points and collected EM data points will determine the initial registration of the EM coordinate system to the 3D model coordinate system.

FIG. **11B** shows a graph **1120** at a later temporal stage compared with the graph **1110**, according to one embodiment. More specifically, the graph **1120** shows the expected location of the endoscope tip **1101** expected from the 3D model has been moved farther along the preplanned navigation path **1102**, as illustrated by the shift from the original expected position of the instrument tip **1101** shown in FIG. **11A** along the path to the position shown in FIG. **11B**. During the EM tracking between generation of the graph **1110** and generation of graph **1120**, additional data points **1103** have been recorded by the EM tracking system but the registration has not yet been updated based on the newly collected EM data. As a result, the data points **1103** in FIG. **11B** are clustered along a visible path **1114**, but that path differs in location and orientation from the planned navigation path **1102** the endoscope tip is being directed by the operator to travel along. Eventually, once sufficient data (e.g., EM data) is accumulated, compared with using only the 3D model or only the EM data, a relatively more accurate estimate can be derived from the transform needed to register the EM coordinates to those of the 3D model. The determination of sufficient data may be made by threshold criteria such as total data accumulated or number of changes of direction. For example, in a branched tubular network such as a bronchial tube network, it may be judged that sufficient data have been accumulated after arriving at two branch points.

FIG. **11C** shows a graph **1130** shortly after the navigation configuration system has accumulated a sufficient amount of data to estimate the registration transform from EM to 3D model coordinates, according to one embodiment. The data points **1103** in FIG. **11C** have now shifted from their previous position as shown in FIG. **11B** as a result of the registration transform. As shown in FIG. **11C**, the data points **1103** derived from EM data is now falling along the planned navigation path **1102** derived from the 3D model, and each

data point among the data points **1103** is now reflecting a measurement of the expected position of endoscope tip **1101** in the coordinate system of the 3D model. In some embodiments, as further data are collected, the registration transform may be updated to increase accuracy. In some cases, the data used to determine the registration transformation may be a subset of data chosen by a moving window, so that the registration may change over time, which gives the ability to account for changes in the relative coordinates of the EM and 3D models—for example, due to movement of the patient.

FIG. **11D** shows an example graph **1140** in which the expected location of the endoscope tip **1101** has reached the end of the planned navigation path **1102**, arriving at the target location in the tubular network, according to one embodiment. As shown in FIG. **11D**, the recorded EM data points **1103** is now generally tracks along the planned navigation path **1102**, which represents the tracking of the endoscope tip throughout the procedure. Each data point reflects a transformed location due to the updated registration of the EM tracking system to the 3D model.

Each of the graphs shown in FIGS. **11A-11D** can be shown sequentially on a display visible to a user as the endoscope tip is advanced in the tubular network. Additionally or alternatively, the processor can be configured with instructions from the navigation configuration system such that the model shown on the display remains substantially fixed when the measured data points are registered to the display by shifting of the measured path shown on the display in order to allow the user to maintain a fixed frame of reference and to remain visually oriented on the model and on the planned path shown on the display.

V.B.IV Mathematical Analysis of Registration Transform

In terms of detailed analysis (e.g., mathematical analysis) and methods of the registration, in some embodiments, a registration matrix can be used to perform the registration between the EM tracking system and the 3D model, and as one example, the matrix may represent a translation and rotation in 6 dimensions. In alternative embodiments, a rotational matrix and a translation vector can be used for performing the registration.

$$M_1(\theta) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \cos\theta & \sin\theta \\ 0 & -\sin\theta & \cos\theta \end{pmatrix}$$

$$M_2(\varphi) = \begin{pmatrix} \cos\varphi & 0 & -\sin\varphi \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ \sin\varphi & 0 & \cos\varphi \end{pmatrix}$$

$$M_3(\psi) = \begin{pmatrix} \cos\psi & \sin\psi & 0 \\ -\sin\psi & \cos\psi & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

From a perspective view of mathematical reasoning, as one example, applying a registration transform involves a shift from one coordinate system (x,y,z) to a new coordinate system (x',y',z') that may in general have its axes rotated to a different 3D orientation as well as having its origin shifted an arbitrary amount in each dimension. For example, a rotation to an azimuthal angle of radians θ may be expressed by the matrix M_1 , a rotation to an inclination angle of φ radians may be expressed by the matrix M_2 etc., and further rotational matrices may be written as the product of rotation matrices. Similarly, a translation vector of (Δx Δy Δz) may

be chosen to represent a translation of the origin in the x, y and z axes by Δx , Δy , and Δz respectively.

The registration transform may be determined by such methods as singular value decomposition on a cross correlation matrix between measured EM positions and estimated positions in the 3D model. The transformation matrix components may then be extracted from the decomposition, e.g., by identifying the appropriate principle components. An error signal may also be generated from the residuals of the determined transform, and the size of the error signal may be used to determine a level of confidence in the position. As further data are taken and the registration transform is determined more accurately, this error signal may decrease, indicating an increasing confidence in positions estimated in this manner.

V.B.V. Registration Method Using Rigid Landmarks

The registration process may additionally or alternatively incorporate a rigid homogenous transformation (4x4) containing a rotation matrix and a translation vector. This transformation is obtained by a registration of one or more point sets, typically by generating the point sets via single value decomposition (SVD), iterative closest point (ICP) algorithm, or another similar algorithm. For PCNL, generating point sets for input into these algorithms may involve performing a gross registration by (i) selecting, as a first point set, easily identifiable rigid landmarks such as ribs, ASIS of the pelvis, and vertebrae (e.g., those identifiable on the outside of the patient) from the pre-operative CT images during the segmentation process, and/or (ii) intraoperatively capturing these landmarks, as a second point set, with the EM localization system through navigating/touching the landmarks with an EM probe or pointer. The targeted kidney stone may also be used as a landmark. In the case of the kidney stone, the stone's location may be captured via a EM sensor enabled ureteroscope or an EM probe attached to a guide wire. In order to reduce registration error, certain landmarks may be weighted differently within the algorithm workflow. In cases where a kidney stone obstructs the renal pathways, registration using rigid landmarks may be used independently.

In one embodiment, the registration process may include intra-operatively capturing registration data using a combination of a handheld EM probe, such as an embedded or "clipped-on" EM-enabled sensor to identify identifiable external rigid landmarks, such as ribs, ASIS of pelvis, and vertebrae, that does not disturb the PCNL workflow. Calibration of the sensor or sensor-embedded device may be achieved by a pivot test resulting in the correlation between the sensor's position and the probe's tip. In some embodiments, the probe may take the form and functionality of a marker pen.

V.B.VI. Locating a Stone Based on EM and Camera Information

Referring back to FIG. **10A**, once the EM sensor data has been registered to the CT scan and the EM-enabled ureteroscope tip or guide wire with EM sensor has been advanced into the kidney KD, the operator is able to move the ureteroscope tip (or guide wire) to identify the location of a stone within the kidney or other patient organ. In the case of a ureteroscope, recall from the description of the tip in Section I.C above with respect to FIG. **3C**, the ureteroscope may include a camera for capturing images of the field of view (FOV) in front of the tip. Camera data captured as a video or sequence of images allows the operator to navigate the kidney to look for the stone. Simultaneously provided

EM data from a distally coupled EM sensor in the ureteroscopy identifies the location of the ureteroscopy tip within the kidney.

In some embodiments, an EM probe or guide wire may be deployed down the working channel of the ureteroscopy to provide additional EM measurements for alignment. After deployment, the EM probe or guide wire may be extended out of the working channel and past the distal tip of the ureteroscopy in order to provide an additional EM measurement. The EM measurement from the EM probe or guide wire may be used in conjunction with the EM data from the distally-mounted EM sensor in the ureteroscopy in order to generate a vector (including position and orientation information), which may be used to define a trajectory for the percutaneous needle access to the operative region.

Once the stone has been located, for example by being present in the FOV of the camera on the tip, the percutaneous cut into the kidney can be performed. FIG. 10B illustrates the introduction of a needle to open a port from inside the kidney KD to outside of the patient, according to one embodiment. In this process, like the ureteroscopy tip or guide wire, the needle also includes an alignment sensor such as an EM sensor. Similarly to the ureteroscopy or guide wire, this may be a simple coil coupled to a wire running up the needle electrically coupled to the computer system. EM data received from the needle EM sensor may be received and processed similarly to ureteroscopy tip or guide wire EM data as describe above.

FIGS. 10C and 10D illustrate sample views of a graphical user interface 1060 for visually presenting needle and ureteroscopy (or guide wire) EM data, according to one embodiment. The EM data from the needle and the EM data from the ureteroscopy tip are processed together by the external computing system to generate a graphical user interface that can be displayed to the operator to facilitate their guiding of the needle towards the stone position, as indicated by the ureteroscopy EM data. As illustrated in FIG. 10C, in one embodiment, the location of the needle, as provided by needle EM sensor data, is indicated by a first graphical element, such as a line on the graphical display 1060A, whereas the location of the stone, as indicated by ureteroscopy EM data, is indicated by a second graphical element, such as a point. As illustrated in FIG. 10D, as the operator inserts the needle into the patient's body and moves it towards the stone, the needle graphic (line) will generally move closer to the stone graphic (point) on the display 1060B. The positions of the graphics over time will indicate whether the operator is successfully moving towards the stone, or whether they are drifting off target. At any point, the ureteroscopy may be separately repositioned to re-center the stone within the FOV, move the ureteroscopy closer to or further from the stone, or look at the stone from a different angle to facilitate alignment and motion of the needle towards the stone.

The needle's motion may be constrained by the surgical robotics system performing the process or by design. For example, if the needle contains only a single EM sensor, the needle may not be able to provide information about the roll of the needle about its long axis. In this case, the needle will generally be able to move in 5 degrees of freedom (in/out, pitch+/-, yaw+/-, but not roll). In one embodiment, the X, Y, and Z axes of the system (and subsequently, through the GUI, the user) of the location of the tip of the needle in space relative to the target (ureteroscopy tip) and relative to the anatomy (pre-operative CT that has been registered with the EM space and actual patient anatomy). The pitch and yaw of the needle tip informs the system of the current heading of

the needle. With this information the system is able to project a predicted path onto the GUI to help the physician align the needle as he continues inserting it towards the target.

In other embodiments, additional EM sensors or other types of alignment sensor may be added more degrees of freedom may be permitted to the needle's motion. In yet other embodiments, the needle may be manually delivered by the physician using the guidance provided through the robotic system's GUI. For example, the introduction of a second EM sensor in the needle that oriented at a non-zero angle with respect to the first EM sensor can provide a roll degree of freedom, and the surgical robotics system 100 may be configured or designed to allow the operator to make a roll motion.

In addition to the basic GUI introduced above, additional graphical or auditory notifications may be provided to indicate that the needle has been positioned sufficiently close to the stone, that the needle has entered the kidney, that the needle has drifted sufficiently far off course, or any other trigger condition that may be warranted or requested by the operator. These notifications may change a color of the graphical user interface, sound a tone, or otherwise. The basic GUI may also be more comprehensive than illustrated in FIGS. 10C and 10D. It may also include an outline of the kidney, which will appear differently based on the orientation in 3D space of the ureteroscopy tip and needle. It may further include outlines of the calices of the kidney and/or vasculature surrounding the kidney, as well as outlines of other organs or critical anatomy.

FIG. 10E illustrates a point in the PCNL procedure where the needle has penetrated the kidney near the stone, according to one embodiment. Once the needle has reached the stone, a balloon may be used to inflate the port, and a suction tube 1050 may be introduced to provide access to the kidney for insertion of larger diameter tools.

The PCNL process described above may be accomplished manually. Generally, the ureteroscopy may be positioned first near the stone by a first operator. The same or a different operator may then insert the needle using the internal EM-sensor (via ureteroscopy or guide wire) as a guide. In some embodiments, the EM sensor may be used to place a fiducial or beacon to assist the physician to return to the location of the stone or calyx, so that the endoscope or guide wire can be removed and does not need to be left in the patient to accomplish the same purpose. Alternatively, manipulation of the ureteroscopy, guide wire, and needle may be accomplished by a surgical robotics system 100.

In an alternative embodiment, rather than using two different "live" alignment sensors attached to the needle and ureteroscopy or guide wire as described above, the PCNL process may be carried out using only a single "live" alignment sensor attached to the needle. In one version of this embodiment, the EM system is registered using a pen or other another implement located outside the body with an attached EM sensor. The pen is used to identify landmarks of the patient's anatomy, and is rotated to register with respect to the EM generators. With this registration and landmark information, an operator or the surgical robotics system is oriented with respect to the patient's anatomy. Subsequently, the needle can be navigated towards the kidney (or other cavity) based on data provided by the EM sensor located in the needle, the landmark location information, and the registration information. An advantage of this approach is that it removes the need for separate navigation of an instrument with an EM sensor into the patient in order to determine where to direct the needle. The

loss of precision provided by the EM sensor close to the stone or other object can be at least partially compensated for by the landmark registration process.

The advantages of the above-described process for placing the needle and associated port are numerous. Navigation of the needle is made less skill intensive using the ureteroscope or guide wire as a guide. A single operator or robotic system may carry out the process. Fluoroscopy can be omitted if desired.

Although the above process has been described with the alignment sensor being an EM sensor (and associated EM generators), in practice other kinds of positioning sensors may be used instead. Examples include, but are not limited to, accelerometers and gyroscopes, magnetometers, fiber optic shape sensing (e.g., via Bragg gratings, Rayleigh scattering, interferometry, or related techniques), etc. Depending on the implementation, registration to a separate form of patient imagery, such as a CT scan, may or may not be necessary to provide a frame of reference for locating stones within the patient.

Further, this process may be used in other operations beyond PCNL, such as gallbladder stone removal, lung (pulmonary/trans thoracic) tumor biopsy. Generally, any type of percutaneous procedure may be performed by using an endoscope with an alignment sensor and a needle with a similar alignment sensor. In each of these processes, the alignment sensor-equipped endoscopic tip entered through a patient cavity into a patient organ provides a guide for the insertion of the alignment sensor-equipped needle. Additional examples include stomach operations, esophagus and lung operations, etc. Further, the objects to be removed do not necessarily need to be urinary stones, they may be any object, such as a foreign body or object created within the human body.

V.B.V. Stone and Fragment Removal

With the suction tube in place, a variety of techniques may be used to remove a stone. Various instruments may be inserted into the suction tube or ureteroscope to break up or remove the stone and stone fragments. Examples include the basket apparatus described above, a laser or optical fiber to break up stones via lithotripsy, an ultrasound device to break up stones via shockwaves, a blender, chisel, or drill to break up stones mechanically, and so on. Alternatively, the various instruments described above may be coupled or integrated into the suction tube in order to assist in the breaking up of kidney stone fragments and debris to assist aspiration using the suction tube.

In one embodiment, once the suction tube is in place and given that the ureteroscope is already in place near the stone, any other instrument taking up the working channel is retracted from that ureteroscope. This may, for example, be the EM sensor itself or another instrument. A basket apparatus, such as the one described above in Section III, or another grasping tool, i.e., grasper, may then be inserted into the working channel of the ureteroscope, and is extended out past the ureteroscope tip near the stone.

The basket apparatus (or other similar device) may be used to capture the stone and place it near the opening at the distal end of the suction tube within the patient organ, where instruments coupled to the suction tube, deployed down the suction tube, or deployed down the working channel of the ureteroscope may break up the stone in order to assist aspiration of the material down the suction tube. Additionally or alternatively, lithotripsy may be performed (using a laser tool inserted through the working channel of the basket

apparatus, ureteroscope, or deployed down or attached to the suction tube) to break up the stone so that it can be sized to fit through the suction tube.

During the procedure, suction (negative pressure) may be applied down the suction tube in order to aspirate the stone or any stone fragments that are generated, while the ureteroscope or basket apparatus continuously irrigates the operative area. Simultaneous irrigation and suction helps maintain pressure in the patient cavity. In embodiments where the ureteroscope may comprise of both a sheath component and a leader component, i.e., a leaderscope, the irrigation fluid may be provided through the working channel of the sheath component, in order for the working channel of the leader component to remain available for tool deployment, such as a basket apparatus or a grasper, to help position and move the stone into closer proximity to the suction tube for aspiration.

Consequently, any instruments extending out of the ureteroscope and the suction on the suction tube operate in tandem to allow capture and removal of the stone or stone fragments from the kidney. Due to the presence of both the suction tube and the surgical tool, whether it be a basket apparatus or other grasping tool, the removal of the stone effectively proceeds as if the operator had two "hands" present within the kidney to deal with the removal of the stone, along with simultaneous vision of the operating area as provided by the camera on the tip of the ureteroscope.

VI. Additional Considerations

The processes described above, particularly those for controlling the arms of the surgical robotics system, processing alignment sensor data to generate position and orientation information for the alignment sensor and/or needle, and for generating a graphical user interface to display this information may all be embodied in computer program instructions stored within a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium, and designed to be executed by one or more computer processors within one or more computing devices. The non-transitory computer-readable medium can be stored on any suitable computer readable media such as RAMs, ROMs, flash memory, EEPROMs, optical devices (CD or DVD), hard drives, floppy drives, or any suitable device. The computer-executable component is preferably a processor but the instructions may alternatively or additionally be executed by any suitable dedicated hardware device.

Upon reading this disclosure, those of skill in the art will appreciate still additional alternative structural and functional designs through the disclosed principles herein. Thus, while particular embodiments and applications have been illustrated and described, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are not limited to the precise construction and components disclosed herein. Various modifications, changes and variations, which will be apparent to those skilled in the art, may be made in the arrangement, operation and details of the method and apparatus disclosed herein without departing from the spirit and scope defined in the appended claims.

As used herein any reference to "one embodiment" or "an embodiment" means that a particular element, feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment. The appearances of the phrase "in one embodiment" in various places in the specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment.

Some embodiments may be described using the expression "coupled" and "connected" along with their derivatives. For example, some embodiments may be described using

the term “coupled” to indicate that two or more elements are in direct physical or electrical contact. The term “coupled,” however, may also mean that two or more elements are not in direct contact with each other, but yet still co-operate or interact with each other. The embodiments are not limited in this context unless otherwise explicitly stated.

As used herein, the terms “comprises,” “comprising,” “includes,” “including,” “has,” “having” or any other variation thereof, are intended to cover a non-exclusive inclusion. For example, a process, method, article, or apparatus that comprises a list of elements is not necessarily limited to only those elements but may include other elements not expressly listed or inherent to such process, method, article, or apparatus. Further, unless expressly stated to the contrary, “or” refers to an inclusive or and not to an exclusive or. For example, a condition A or B is satisfied by any one of the following: A is true (or present) and B is false (or not present), A is false (or not present) and B is true (or present), and both A and B are true (or present).

In addition, use of the “a” or “an” are employed to describe elements and components of the embodiments herein. This is done merely for convenience and to give a general sense of the invention. This description should be read to include one or at least one and the singular also includes the plural unless it is obvious that it is meant otherwise.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for removing an object from a patient, comprising:
 - advancing a first medical instrument into a cavity of the patient by inserting the first medical instrument through a natural orifice of the patient, wherein the first medical instrument includes a position sensor and is robotically controllable;
 - navigating the first medical instrument to the object to be removed from within the cavity of the patient;
 - based at least in part on an output from the position sensor, inserting a needle into the patient to create a percutaneous port;
 - inserting a second medical instrument into the cavity of the patient through the percutaneous port, wherein the second medical instrument is robotically controllable;
 - providing irrigation of a fluid into the cavity of the patient;
 - performing, with the first medical instrument, lithotripsy on the object to break the object apart; and
 - applying suction to the second medical instrument to assist in causing the object to be removed from the cavity of the patient through the second medical instrument.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the first medical instrument comprises a laser tool configured to perform lithotripsy.
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising inserting the laser tool through a working channel of the first medical instrument.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the first medical instrument comprises an ultrasound device, a blender, a chisel, or a drill.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising robotically manipulating the first medical instrument to move a position of the object.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein providing irrigation comprises providing irrigation through the second medical instrument.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein applying suction to the second medical instrument is configured to capture the stone.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein inserting the second medical instrument into the cavity of the patient through the percutaneous port comprises inserting the second medical instrument robotically.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein inserting the second instrument robotically is based on the output of the position sensor.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the position sensor comprises an electromagnetic (EM) sensor.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the first medical instrument comprises a sheath component and a leader component, and wherein the leader component is inserted through a working channel of the sheath component.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the sheath component is attached to a first instrument base positioned on a first robotic arm, and wherein the leader component is attached to a second instrument base on a second robotic arm.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the first medical instrument comprises a camera, and wherein the method further comprises visualizing the object with the camera.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the first medical instrument comprises an endoscope, and wherein the second medical instrument comprises a suction tube.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the cavity of the patient comprises a kidney, and wherein the object comprises a kidney stone.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the first medical instrument includes a base that is attachable to a robotic arm, and the navigating the first medical instrument includes controlling the robotic arm to move a distal end portion of the first medical instrument.

17. The method of claim 1, further comprising: presenting graphical user interface data indicating a position of the needle and a location of the first medical instrument to assist in guiding the needle to the object.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the needle includes a sensor and the position of the needle is based on sensor data from the sensor.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the sensor comprises an electromagnetic (EM) sensor.

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